

**BLACK
BREAD**

—AND—

**RED
COFFINS**

NEGEV HANSON

THE POETRY OF EARTH
IS NEVER DEAD



MARY CORN 1889

251-



Printed in Great Britain

THE ARMY OF CHRIST ON THE MARCH

"Brothers, soldiers of Christ, defeat the Bolsheviks, the enemies of Christ."—(*Soviet Poster*)

BLACK BREAD AND RED COFFINS

BY

NEGLEY FARSON

Author of

"Sailing Across Europe," etc.

ILLUSTRATED



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FOREWORD

Karavaev's funeral passed below my window. I watched his scarlet hearse move slowly past the Kremlin. Inside the Kremlin was Stalin the dictator, and yet his government was applying the principle of Communism. The G. P. U., after a secret tribunal, had just shot my billiards partner, but I was swimming in their bathing club every afternoon. Off and on I had spent three years in Russia under the Czar. I was finishing another under the Soviets. I could feel neither Right nor Left, only upside down. I knew by then that the minute I began to feel sure about anything in Russia I could be certain I was wrong. It was too easy to accept the symbol for the fact. The slogan they carried behind Karavaev struck me as being rather funny, but it would not have been funny to Karavaev, or Krol, or Guseva, or the old lady with the Hat. It was terribly real and so were they. That was Moscow in 1929.

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BLACK BREAD AND RED COFFINS

I

BURLESQUE

SEVEN FAMILIES, OR TWENTY-TWO PEOPLE, LIVING in the eight rooms of a big apartment formerly occupied by a single family consisting of husband, wife, and child.

"But what did they do with so many rooms!" exclaim the new tenants. "Surely, they must have lost one another!"

Stepanitch, one of the new lodgers, but formerly coachman for the old owner of the apartment, explained it for the hundreth time—he spat on the end of his cigarette to begin with.

"No, they never lost themselves, they were very sly and bourgeois people."

The lodging was a typical one, situated on the third flat of a five-story house. One of those communal warrens in vast but crowded Moscow. Its front was plaster over bricks. The plaster was painted gray, and, what with the cold winters and hot summers, bits of it were always dropping off. Each apartment was a city in itself; the rooms were homes, its corridor was the street; and a placard at its entrance door

indicated the number of door-bell rings for each family.

One, two, three—seven for Guseva, eight for Petrova. Petrova, the dressmaker, was always complaining. "My head is aching from counting eight rings—and my customers are furious." Guseva, the violin teacher, agreed it was unbearable, and after much thought about it they agreed: one long and one short ring for Guseva, one short and one long for Petrova. Splendid!

But this arrangement was greatly disapproved of by the owner of two equal rings—Aaron Zilberman, a man twice divorced, paying "aliment" for two children from his first marriage, and who now had a newborn son from his non-registered new wife. Aaron Zilberman, the alimony hero, grew pale every time two rings sounded in the apartment. He was in constant fear of meeting his first wife. She could never forget the insult. She called on him constantly, shaking her fist, throwing challenges at the courageous little non-registered third wife.

"You son of a dog!" she told Zilberman. "You are concealing your income from the court sub-agent. My children cannot exist on the crumbs you are throwing them!"

Guseva, Petrova, the coachman's wife, and Matrosova, a fat woman with five children—and one on the

way—peeped in from the corridor to enjoy these scenes.

“Pfui! Listen to her telling him!”

Pupils came to take singing lessons in Guseva’s room. They disturbed greatly the young economist. He wrote essays and reports in a neighboring room for an economic magazine.

“Do, re, me . . . do, re, me, fa-aaaaa!”

He tapped on Guseva’s door.

“Excuse me, please, Vera Ivanovna; I know you have to earn your bread—but when will you finish your lessons?”

“Do, re, me, fa-aaaa!” sang the pupil.

“Silly question!” answered Guseva. “Citizen, are you crazy? I never asked you when you would finish your coughing last night.”

She slammed the door in his face.

“Do, re, me, faa . . . do, re, me, fa-aaaaa!”

There are seven tables in the kitchen where each family makes its meals, and thirteen primuses (small portable stoves) are singing their monotonous song. Twice a week the families cook hot food. On the other days they warm things up. Eight women, including two servants, are working there. The kitchen is also the communal club. A gossip exchange. The two servants sleep in the corridor with all their property and dresses folded carefully in wooden boxes under their

small iron beds. They are merry girls, and when they are washing their masters' laundry in the common kitchen they sing.

"Shut up!" cries Guseva.

"Masha, listen to the lady! What delicate ears she has!"

And the rosy-faced servant girls plunge their arms into the white foam of the trough.

"Whoop-whiskey-popsky!"

Children are running along the corridor. One of them is whistling like a locomotive. The rest are the cars. Guseva's little dog is running after them, barking loudly.

"Silence! cursed creatures!" shouts the economist. He flings open his door. "Go to your rooms at once!"

"Cursed creature yourself!" retorts Matrosova, pregnant, already the mother of four of them. "See the bourgeois who has a room to himself—while we have one room for seven! Where can children play? That's what I'd like to know!"

The economist kicks the dog.

"Dogs!" cries a friend who has come to visit him, "I despise them. I hired part of a room belonging to a citizen for twenty rubles a month. And then I had to fulfil other conditions; to heat the whole of the room at my own expense, to care for the dog belonging to the citizeness, to let it out whenever it needed it.

Now it happened that the dog was too exigent. It interfered with my profession. I could not work. I decided to break the third condition imposed by my landlady—I would not take care of the dog. If the dog wanted to go out it could arrange such things for itself. And now she is suing to evict me from my living space.”

“I have worked it out,” says the economist. “The law says that every person in Moscow must have a minimum of six square metres living space. My figures show that it is only 5.7423!”

“I agree with you about dogs. Look at the end of Comrade Karavaev! He loved the Revolution—but a dog caused his death! He was President of the House Committee of 35 Malaya Ordynka. The house had but one flat made up of ten rooms. The rooms were occupied by a nest of bourgeoisie. Four of them were owned by the former owner of the house, a nepman named Krol. The others were occupied by former aristocratic families and Krol’s relatives. They enjoyed their type of life, danced the fox-trot, and hated the Soviet power.”

Karavaev was a new tenant, but his Communist ideology soon made him president.

In 1927 Krol senior was executed for counter-revolutionary actions. He was speculating. His son remained in the old house as head of the family. Once he and Karavaev had a great quarrel because of a dog

belonging to Krol. Karavaev was exhausted by Krol's bourgeois mentality. And Krol stabbed him—he killed him! Comrade Karavaev's funeral passed below my window. I saw his white face looking up at me, looking up from the flowers in the Red coffin. I read the slogan they carried behind him:—

“WE ARE BURYING A COMRADE WHO WAS KILLED BY A WHITE PARTISAN FOR HAVING DEFENDED THE LODGING RIGHTS OF THE LABORING PEOPLE!”

“Yes, the houses in Moscow ought to be delivered to the workers; I say— Let us evict the bourgeoisie! Evict the former house owners from the houses which belonged to them!”

In the night the apartment is not silent. The economist is coughing in his room. Zilberman's young wife is pacing up and down in their room, balancing her crying baby. “I shall oversleep and be late at my office,” mutters Zilberman. The two servant girls in the corridor are snoring like soldiers. At the end of the corridor two mice are gnawing a dry crust of bread dropped there by the dressmaker's son. They are bolder now since Guseva's cat was spirited away by the coachman's wife for having stolen her Sunday chicken. Morning comes. People are rushing to their work. Rushing to market. Some of them have been standing in queues since six o'clock, waiting to get butter and

milk for their morning's breakfast. There is a line standing before the communal bathroom door. The old coachman is holding the fort. He rubs his head lazily, mumbling: "Too many people in Moscow—too many—where do they come from, my Lord?"

Masha, the servant, has been standing in a queue since seven o'clock. She is late this morning and will have to pay the penalty—no butter by the time her turn arrives.

"Who is the last?"

A snub-nosed young girl in *valenki* (felt boots) asks the withered old woman behind Masha.

"Me."

"Please, grandmother, tell the others that I am standing behind you. I'll come back at once."

The girl walks across the street to take a place in another coöperative line.

"Look at her!" cries a gloomy old man. "She's a speculator! The devil with her!—isn't 250 grammes enough?"

"Citizen, why do you offend an innocent soul? If she is a speculator she probably has a big family to support. God knows, life is expensive these days!"

"Who are you, with one leg in the grave, that you should defend speculators? Huh!"

A ghost of an old lady tries to enter the line.

"Whoa! Whoa there, citizeness, not so fast! Don't

push in here! Back! You with the hat on your tuft!—you stand in the line like anybody else. Go back with your hat!”

The old lady with the old-fashioned hat is pushed back.

“My hat,” she says icily. “What of it? Your shawls are much more expensive than my hat.”

“You stand in line!”

“The time is over when one had to bow before your hats.”

A beggar comes along the line.

“Dear citizen, give something to a poor crippled man. My beautiful lady—a kopeck for a poor orphan who has no father and no mother and no place to lay his head.”

The old woman with a face like a baked apple produces a kopeck from her blouse, gives it to the one-legged beggar and, turning her eyes to the sky, crosses herself.

“Orphan!” snorts the man in the line with the red mustache. “And him not a day less than sixty years old!”

Two women with babies in arms approach. Having a baby in their arms, according to proletarian custom, entitles them to enter the store directly without standing in the queue—as if they were the only customers on the premises!

"My God—how many children to-day!"

"You're a simpleton! Think those are their own babies? Hah! I know any amount of babies that are rented out by their mothers. Rent a baby and get your butter. Ha-ha!"

"Saint Virgin? Is that possible?"

"Babies!" nods one woman. "Ha! My godmother shares a room with a washerwoman. Suddenly, the washerwoman had a baby! Who was the father? No one knows. I hear that a certain man is paying aliment. It appears that he denied his fatherhood, but the court said he was the baby's father. She gets twenty rubles from him and eighteen rubles from the Insurance—cash—and besides that there is the child. 'Nastienka,' says my godmother, 'let me have your Valka. I have to stand in line for butter.' 'Fine, if you give me 100 grammes for Valka.' They bargain, and finally my godmother gets the loan of Valka for fifty grammes. And then comes along another tenant, 'Nastienka, please let me have your Valka.' 'How much?' Ah yes—and for every baby you get four months off from the factory and full pay. If I were a girl now I would have a baby every year—no matter how much it hurt."

"That baby! Let me tell you—if a woman wants to buy some textile goods she goes to that woman. 'Let me have Valka,' she says. 'Yes, but you must remember

to cut off a piece for an apron for Valka.' 'Valka's too small for an apron.' 'That's my business—maybe I'm collecting a dowry for my daughter. You don't have to take Valka if you don't want her.' "

The women are silent. The line moves ahead. The red-mustached man speaks gloomily.

"Daughter of a dog, your Nastienka!"

"I remember," he goes on, "a couple of years ago when there were vodka lines. A comrade of mine had just got a child. The father decided to take it with him to enter a vodka shop. The mother protested. In vain. The father even sneered, said the child would have its first liquor baptizing. On his way home he bumped into some comrades. 'Where are you going?' they said. 'Home—with some vodka.' 'Fool! Let's take it together in a beer hall.' They went in there and got drunk. Naturally. And when he left the beer hall he forgot the child on the chair."

"Czarina of the sky!"

"Fact. When he recovered consciousness the next morning he couldn't remember where he had been. Didn't know where the child was! Believe me. *Nu!* And you should have seen him running down the street, his face white as milk. Ha! there was a time, I can tell you! Running to the police, 'Have you found a child?' Looking at the babies in all the public nurseries, 'Haven't you found a child? A little one—he was

small and fat. I—I left him . . .’ Yes, by God, he will be unhappy all his life.”

After two hours Masha gets into the shop. She buys her ticket for the legal limit of 250 grammes. She also gets a 20-kopeck slip for some pickles. Then she stands in line again until she reaches the attendant, who takes her cash slip and hands her her pickles. But when she gets to the butter man—the last of the butter is gone! She walks home swiftly against the cutting winter wind, and as she passes the dead Church of Our Savior, a voice from a radio trumpet roars overhead:—
“WORKERS! COÖPERATION IS THE ROAD
TO THE NEW LIFE.”

II

THE UNDER DOGS

THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION HAD BEEN GOING on for eleven years when I walked into one of the tenement buildings of the First Russian Textile Printing Mill and found twelve people living in one small room. There were six small single beds stretched around the bare walls. Five of them were each inhabited by a husband and wife. None of these families was related to the others. Their beds stood around the walls with no curtains between them. And if you can imagine five men and five women dressing and undressing before each other, in sickness and in health, month after month, year after year, you will perhaps feel grateful for the weakness of the one electric bulb which kept that kennel in semidarkness.

I do not say that that room is typical of the living conditions of Russian workers. I know that the authorities are building dwellings as fast as they can. I have been in some of these "ideal workers' homes" in Kiev; too perfect, as are many things in the Soviet, in plan and too few in quantity. I know that the workers in Moscow are agitating to have all the former house-

owners driven out of their homes—nepmen, priests, former bourgeoisie, members of the so-called leisure class. The workers claim that something like 200,000 more “living spaces” will be acquired for the proletariat in this way. But none of these things have any bearing on the sordidness of the rooms I saw in that textile tenement.

It was not that these workers were among the most poorly paid hands. Each one was getting more than the average wage. Four men were making \$37.50 a month, and the other man was making \$50. The average wage of a textile worker is about \$30. But not one of them was a Communist.

It is hard to say whether that was a case of cause or effect; whether they were getting the worst end of the living conditions because they were not Communists, or whether they were not Communists because they did not think they were living well enough.

“The Communists,” declared one of these men, a lopsided man with a nose that pointed across his face, “they’re the ones who get all that’s good.”

“Then why aren’t you a Communist?” I asked him.

“Because we don’t believe in them!” roared a man from the outer circle that hemmed me in. “We have waited eleven years for our lives to improve, and nothing has happened.”

“Yes,” cried another, “I don’t say that we want

Nicholas back, but we want to live decent. You come into my room."

He led me into another slit of a room where five people lived, the average in this tenement being five or seven to a cell. As we entered it a woman lying in a dirty box-bed pulled the ragged curtains apart to see what this trampling of boots meant, and at sight of me hurriedly shut them again. Another woman, sitting beside a dirty bed in the far corner, just sat there and stared at us stupidly.

"Now look at that light!" demanded the disgruntled worker. "Look here!" He walked back to the door and sat down on the stool by his own bed. There was a bed-stand on which stood a tin cup and kettle; and he went through the motions of pouring out tea. "I can't tell when my cup is full," he cried. "It's too dark. Now how do you expect us to live in darkness like this? Many times we have begged for another light, but what do they tell us—another bulb would use up too much energy. Pfui! Damn them, I tell you!"

"But why do you say that the old times were better?" I asked. "In the time of Nicholas you also lived four and five in a room—I saw you."

"Know it, know it—that's true. Listen, I'll tell you what's worse. In the time of Nicholas, when we wanted to leave a mill we went to the *baren*"—he snatched off his hat and bowed—"and we said that we wanted to



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THE RICH MAN'S CHOICE

Our modern Vladimirs elect for Christianity.—(Soviet Poster)

go, and he said good-by, and we went and got a job in another mill. Now if we leave this mill we can't get no job. Leave one and you've left all of 'em. And there are 240,000 unemployed people on the Moscow labor bourse."

"Yes, yes, we've got to stay here," said the lopsided man.

We went back to the original room. When I had first entered, a man sitting by his bed was making a fishing net, and he was using a wooden net-needle exactly like those the fishermen use on the New Jersey coast. I smiled as I told him this, but he did not smile; he was tying knots swiftly and grimly, and he looked up saying, "I'm making this for when I go back to my village."

The tenement had four decks, each housing about a hundred people. And on each deck there was a dark kitchen with a big black communal stove. People passed up and down the halls carrying bowls of steaming milk, buckwheat, soup. One man had a tin pail covered with a cloth. Whether it was food or washing I could not tell.

In the first room sat a workwoman dressed like a peasant—white kerchief tied around her chin and head, belted blouse, its tail sticking out around her rough dress, heavy felt boots on her squat feet. She sat on a stool by her draped box-bed, her hands folded

in her lap, sunk in lethargic stupidity and resignation. Her bedstand held a frying pan with a slab of grease and meat, waiting to be cooked on the communal stove. Having told me that their child slept with her, her husband led me out into the narrowing "hall" of the room and showed me his own bed. It was a contraption of boxes and crates, with all his worldly goods stowed away underneath.

In the room with five people there was an ikon and a dim guttering candle. A damp spot stood out on the bare greenish plastered walls. Surveying this grim cell, I did not wonder that the matron of the dispensary had said "tuberculosis" when I asked her what illness was most prevalent. My only wonder was that people could exist in such a murk. There were children running up and down the dark corridors, mothers gossiping in groups, their babies in their arms. After a while there was a meeting of the Fabkom, the factory committee, talking about "defending the rights of labor." And that made me wonder most of all.

III

A RED WORKMAN

TO BEGIN WITH LET ME SAY THAT LEV YAKOVITCH is a Communist, and that that makes up for a great deal of what he would otherwise miss in Soviet Russia. In the first place, it gives him a goal, an ideal, a faith; and while it is permissible to doubt that faith can move mountains or even make the factory wheels of the Soviet Union go round any faster, it nevertheless does compensate a large proportion of the Russian population for the present rough road they are traveling. For the life of a Russian to-day is that of a man who is living in a house at the same time that he is building it. Moreover, he is tearing down the old structure as he erects the new; he did not even have clean ground to begin with.

With this ideal and this faith in the future (even though he may never live to see it fully realized) Lev Yakovitch can put up with hardships that would seem intolerable to the average Westerner. He sleeps four people in one room, lives mostly upon black bread and tea, has only one or two decent suits of clothes, cooks warm meals twice weekly on a primus

stove and warms them up for the rest of the week on the same beastly contrivance, and still he is happy. Very much happier than the average clerk in New York or Chicago. I do not say that he is happier than the average American workman, because the American workman to-day should be one of the most contented men in the world. Lev Yakovitch doesn't think so. He knows, he told me, that the American workman lives better than he does but he has a notion that the American workman is producing under a capitalist bondage of some sort, and that he is always irking to throw off the yoke. Whenever Lev Yakovitch hears of a textile strike in Passaic, N. J., or a coal strike in West Virginia (and, believe me, if there is one his government-ruled papers see that he gets the details of it soon enough); whenever Lev hears of anything like that he takes it as something symptomatic of the whole working population of America. Lev Yakovitch's ideas about labor conditions in America are colored or tainted with a hangover from the Jewish tales sent back from the sweat-shops of the lower East Side of New York.

Even so, he probably knows more about America than the average American knows about Russia, which is not saying much.

But to get back to Lev Yakovitch's reasons for happiness. He has the satisfaction of knowing that if he

must submit to a great many physical hardships and go without many of the things that he wants and needs, still he is suffering in company. There are a million other Communists in Soviet Russia who are in much the same boat. Their maximum monthly salary is limited to \$112. Lev Yakovitch is getting \$35, the average salary of a Russian workman. But he has the consolation of knowing that Maxim Litvinov can get only \$112. Maxim may have two spacious rooms and a bath over in the Foreign Office, the palatial home of a former sugar baron, and may ride about Moscow in a sumptuous Rolls-Royce, nevertheless he has a wife and two children, just as Lev has, and probably does not have ten rubles in his pocket that he can really call his own. Maxim Litvinov is considerably better off than Lev Yakovitch, as is Nicholas Vinogradsky, a great figure in the State Planning Department, but they show the goals to which Lev can aspire, for which he can really put in hard work. Money, you see, isn't everything in this world. And Nicholas Vinogradsky wears a twenty-dollar suit, no better than Lev's.

All this is true. While Lev Yakovitch might envy Litvinov and Vinogradsky, and most certainly he does envy the skilled workmen in his own printing mill, some of whom are making over \$125 every month, still his envy does not hurt. There is nothing bitter about it. If it is money he is after, then the hill ahead

of him is not so very high to climb. By withdrawing from the Communist party and becoming a hotel porter he can easily earn double the salary of Maxim Litvinov. But if it is power he is after, a position of importance in his country, then he must abandon the quest for gross material things. And that is a good healthy race which many a man in London, Paris, or New York would be glad to get into.

This is not Communist propaganda; it is merely stating a few facts that ought to be obvious to every one who has come in contact with Russian Communists. Millions of Russian workmen feel that so long as this is their country, and those at the top do not use their power to lift themselves high above the mass socially, they can put up with almost any discomfort along the long road. The road is rough, but they believe they are marching toward a promised land.

I chose the life of Lev Yakovitch, a Communist, because, as such, he is typical of the vanguard of Russian workmen to-day. I like his enthusiasm. I like to go with him to his factory club and hear the workers studying international economy. I like to eat with him in his coöperative *stolovia*, to have coffee and biscuits with him in his little ten-by-fourteen room up on the Volkanskaya—his two children sleeping silently in their cots by our table. I like to walk with him over to his factory's skating rink, its kino, its theater. I

like to have my photo taken by the factory club's Photographic Society—and jolly bad photos they take too. Nevertheless I am constantly meeting workers who are not Communists.

I entered a worker's room the other night. He was the factory fireman, getting \$30 a month. Besides the lace-draped bed on which he and his wife slept, and a perfect museum of pre-war furniture, there were three golden ikons in one corner and a picture of Lenin in the other. The ikons showed that the fireman could not be a Communist, as all Communists are atheists. I pointed to the ikons. "What!" I exclaimed. "You have both?"

He grinned and bowed towards the ikons. "I'm getting old," he said. "Not taking any chances."

He was playing Lenin and the ikons both ways across the board.

IV

A RED WORKER'S HOME

LEV YAKOVITCH LIVES ON ONE OF THE FEW HILLS in Moscow. When I started up it one snowy night I saw what I first thought to be a *drosbky* rushing down at me without its horse. But as it was passing me the dark mass broke, and eight children rolled off a sled.

Lev Yakovitch lives in one of those collectivist apartments so common in Moscow. What they usually mean is that several families have moved into one single apartment, each family occupying one room; kitchen, toilet, and bathroom being communal. No race less good natured than the Russians could put up with it.

My ring was answered by a pretty young woman with masses of curling chestnut hair. Behind her stood a Red soldier who had also been expecting a guest. They both showed their disappointment. But when I asked for Lev Yakovitch's room the girl pointed to the first one on the right, the Red soldier popped into his room, and the girl walked slowly back along the dingy corridor. Lev Yakovitch, who had heard my voice, now opened his door.

Most of the rooms in these congested apartments are so stuffed with furniture that you cannot cross them in a straight line in any one direction. The family has very often moved all its belongings, usually the contents of a former entire apartment, into their one cell. You see a sideboard packed with crockery and glassware; a dressing table with dozens of framed photographs, postcard albums, *objets d'arts*, hair-brushes, combs, bottles of scent, cigarette cases, ash trays. The hat-rack on the wall by the door is swollen with coats, dresses, and the family's umbrellas and cameras; its top is a litter of feminine hats; its bottom is covered with shoes, boots, goloshes. There are beds or sofas in every corner.

But Lev Yakovitch's room was as bare as a cell. Bare, that is, except for three beds and one table. There was a child in each of the small beds by the door; a boy of three years and a girl of eighteen months. The boy was being wrapped up in his little coat and muffler as I came in; he would go out and play for half an hour in the snowy yard. Some children had a snowslide going there. The little girl sat up and blinked at me with her squirrel-like eyes.

"We haven't much furniture," said Lev Yakovitch, apologizing for the unstuffed state of his home. "We have only just started."

He explained that he himself came from the

Chernigov government and did not have any Moscow furniture, and I refrained from telling him to thank God he had not.

He said that this whole apartment once belonged to a Jewish lawyer, a graduate of Oxford University, and that the beautiful girl who had let me in was his former wife. He had acquired another wife, moved out, and was paying this one voluntary alimony by letting her keep the room. Rooms are precious in Moscow. Another man in the house had divorced his wife; but they were still occupying the same bed, as the wife could not find another place to go. He had divorced her because she was incompatible.

Lev Yakovitch judged the floor space of his room to be thirty-two square meters—equivalent to a room of about ten by eleven feet. For this he was paying six dollars a month. This included heat, water, and light. The water cost forty cents a month per person. Heat cost twice what he paid for the actual living space, which in his case was only one dollar a month. The rest was for electricity. It was very important, he explained, that rents should be figured this way because it made a great difference in the summer time. Then he and his wife and their two babies rented a room in a *datcha* (bungalow) in the country outside of Moscow. They paid \$25 there for a room for the whole

summer. And they could keep the room in Moscow by only paying for the floor space.

Lev's wife was a thin girl, with that pallor and strained lines of the face which the mill stamps on all of them. Her blonde hair was cut in a very good Eton crop. She wore a white cotton shirtwaist, very stiffly ironed, and a short blue skirt. She was twenty-four and had been working in the mill since she was seventeen. Lev was twenty-eight. He was born in the Chernigov government, where he passed through a sort of grammar-grade law school. At fourteen he had gone into a metal works which had been put on a war basis. From 1919 to 1922 he had been in the Red Army. After that he had returned to his village where, in its specialty of handicraft, he made as much as \$75 a month as a thread-waxer, whatever that is. But the Red army had shown him Moscow. Returning, he had got a job in this textile mill, where he met and married Valya; and now, although he is only making half as much as he would in his village, he will leave neither the mill nor Moscow.

"Moscow is so interesting!" he told me, producing at the same time a photograph of a glider the factory aviation club had made, in which he had stayed off the ground seventeen minutes.

While we were talking the child came back. Valya

took him out to the communal bathroom and toilet; then she undressed him, gave him his cup of milk, and put him to bed. She took some of his clothes out to a communal cupboard in the hall, as the family had neither bureau nor wardrobe of their own. The boy went to sleep while we were talking. Valya took the coffee pot and went out to heat it in the kitchen over their primus.

I sat with my back to the double doors leading into the next room. Through them I could hear the conversation of its two male occupants—an engineer and an actor from the Balshoie Theater. Frequently I heard the word culture. They were arguing about it fiercely.

"Tell me," I said to Lev Yakovitch, "what are you going to be?"

"Be?" The question puzzled him; he looked around at his wife. "Why—I am a worker."

"But what are you studying in your night school?"

I had expected him to say that he was studying to be an engineer or, at least, an executive.

"Oh, I'm studying the history of the workers' movement in different countries."

He said that the seven-hour day had given him an extra hour a day in which to develop his culture. A ridiculous statement, perhaps. It had no connection with money.

V

MITKA'S KINGDOM

MITKA YAKOVITCH IS FOUR YEARS OLD, AND FOUR times a week, while his parents are working in their textile mill, he can spend his afternoons, from three to seven o'clock, in the Moscow Children's Library. He is taken there by his nurse, a peasant girl to whom Lev Yakovitch and his wife pay \$7.50 a month to look after Mitka and his baby sister while the parents are helping the Soviet factories fight the capitalists. There are women and young girls in the Children's Library to watch over Mitka and tons of other kids. He has dozens of friends there; some of them are nine years old.

The library is in the former home of a very rich tea merchant, a bourgeois. It has thousands of the children's books and beautifully colored pamphlets that Soviet Russia manufactures so enthusiastically for its coming generation. They are all classified by subjects—history, geography, politics, etc.; so that on the eve of Lenin's Day, for instance, Mitka could be given an entire file of books and pamphlets suitable to his age, telling him all about the great man's life. On

the play-room wall for the youngest children is a picture of Lenin as a curly-headed child—just like Mitka. After his reading or study or lecture Mitka is supplied with paper and paints or crayons.

"Give me the red one!" cries Mitka.

Like all things that the Russians do for their children, this library is excellent. It is a trifle too pedagogic in the way all books are classified as "positive" or "negative," good or bad for children's temperaments, and in the way the women supervisors stand around with notebooks jotting down why or why not a child laughs, noting his various reactions. But Mitka is oblivious of all that. For him, as a place to play in the cold winter, it simply cannot be beaten.

"I want to draw a horse," he says, "a green one."

"But horses are not green, Mitka darling."

"Mine is!"

As an implement of the Communists this library also cannot be beaten. If Mitka is going to learn about life, the Communists intend to see that he learns about it from their angle. "Give me a child until he is seven," say the Jesuits, "and you can have him for the rest of his life." In the Children's Library the Communists have got Mitka.

It is five in the afternoon, and one of the young Russian poets has come to read her own book to the children. Let us suppose that to-day we have Miss

Barto, who has just done an excellent book called "Brothers." It is an exquisitely turned-out work with vivid illustrations. Its back says that this first edition is 10,000 copies, priced thirty cents each. "Little brothers," begins Comrade Barto, holding up her book, "I shall tell you a story about some little brothers of yours who look very different from you and live in different parts of the world." She reads (excuse the translation):

"The little black brother has curled hair
Which looks like fur.
He is very, very black and his eyes are too.
He is stamping his feet, saying
'Gilli—Milli—Ga. . . .'"

Comrade Barto holds up the book and shows a little nigger boy jumping up and down outside a Kaffir *kraal*. His mother and brothers are cooking some yams, supposedly. Reads Miss Barto:

"The little yellow brother has narrow eyes;
His hair is stiff as needles.
Tching—ling—tchen . . ."

Mitka yawns. He has seen plenty of Chinese boys in Moscow, all the little knife-jugglers. But he has never seen a black baby. Miss Barto now holds up the book showing a little brown baby lying under a palm:

"The third little brother is very fair indeed,
With his eyes looking like coal,
And his body like chocolate. . . .
. . . Kive . . . Shva . . . Shva . . ."

Mitka sits up. He is intrigued by some draft animals in the background, crosses between water-bulls and yak. They are pulling a strange cart past a temple. And Comrade Barto goes on to another stanza:

"The white-skinned brother has a sharp and merry voice.
His eyes are very cheerful,
And his hair is very yellow.
He is jumping up and down, saying
'Mama—mama—ma . . .'"

The children all yell. They have recognized themselves. A little Russian boy, bare-legged, in a red shirt, pointing to his little village log cabin. The picture is complete, the affinity established; little brown, black, yellow, and white brothers! Brothers! And now the young lady poet turns to the serious half of her book: this is what life is like for the poor little black, yellow, and brown brothers. See the little black boy inside his hut, his mother putting him to bed, singing:

"Father is not yet back.
He left the house with the dawn.
He carried his heavy burdens
Until all his strength has gone.
Oh-la . . .



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THE SAVIOR OF THE WORLD

Easter, blessed Easter—Christ, who is God, will lead you from death to life.—(*Soviet Poster*)

The opposite page is a full-spread in vivid reds, yellows, blacks, and blues of papa and other negroes, their backs bent, loading bales into a ship, a hard-jawed white overseer looking on. The action now becomes more dramatic; on the next full-spread a Chinese silk-mill is shown with a supercilious yellow-faced foreman watching a mother and daughter at work. Miss Barto chants:

And so on. The Indian mother sings to her son: "Don't waken your father; he came back quite ex-

hausted; to-morrow he will bend his back over the swampy lands he is cultivating, which have killed so many men; the boss will never let him rest." (Full-page spread of Indian papa working in paddy field, with scowling overseer standing by.) And now—why, it might be Mitka's mother singing:

"The time is not far off
When you will become a strong worker who will
Take his place beside his father
Who fought for the mill.

"Don't forget your little brothers
There in foreign lands.
Perhaps you will be together with them
In fire and smoke . . . [gasps from children]
And together with them you shall
VANQUISH!"

On the page facing the verse is the closing pictured tableau of the saga: a factory scene—papa and two sons stoking a Soviet steel mill, with a red fade-out in upper left corner showing silhouette of three armed workmen firing on the Czar's Cavalry from behind a house. That is the way they won their mill.

"Yaw!" yells Mitka, seizing his neighbor's paint brush. "I want to draw a cannon."

VI

COMMUNAL KITCHENS

SOME ONE HAS CALLED EATING ONE OF LIFE'S THREE great pleasures; it is about the only one you don't get tired of before you die. Forty-day fasts, vegetarianism, banting, and such like are understandable fads and fancies, but that an entire nation should be indifferent about its food is something quite startling, especially when that nation used to have the most glorious food in the world. Poor Russia!

The truth is that it was the old Russian bourgeoisie who knew how to eat. The peasants and working classes, reared in poverty, never acquired the art; to them white bread meant cake. And probably because he has lived in almost serfdom as a peasant the lower-deck Slav is the most indifferent man in the world as to what he puts in his stomach. I noticed this first in the Balkans, where I saw Serbs, Bulgars, and Czechs living on an uninspiring diet of feeble cornbread and weak wine. They had all the ingredients around them to make good cornpone—milk, eggs, butter galore—but they just never thought of mixing these things together. Raised by negroes myself, I liked to think what

a black mammy could have done in those parts. I have had corn bread in the tanbark regions of West Virginia that would make a Slav stand on his head. And as for chicken—well, I simply can't write about it; it would make me too homesick.

"What do you eat?" I asked Lev Yakovitch.

My question was prompted by several days coasting about in the communal kitchens of the First Russian Textile Printing Mill's working quarters. Five and six people living in one room was not so bad; anyway, it was a sight I had become accustomed to. But eight or nine families cooking on the same stove—that took some swallowing.

These stoves, formerly used by the single family inhabiting the apartment, each room of which now held a family of its own, were heated only twice a week. On these two days the entire population of the apartment, sometimes as many as forty people, cooked their week's food. It was a sort of field day of frying, baking, and stewing. All the food was heated up thereafter on the individual primus stoves. Each family had a table of its own in the kitchen, and on each of these sat a primus. And in all my wanderings I had found just one Russian who admitted that he could not eat warmed-up food. His family of eight, he confessed, cooked something fresh and hot on their primus every day. I asked him what it was.

"I don't know—soup, potatoes, a cutlet."

A cutlet, I might say, is any form of hashed meat, fish, what not, padded out with flour. A dangerous thing to order in an unknown restaurant. In cutlet form I have eaten horse, sturgeon, snow grouse; and in some cutlets I am sure I have had all three together.

I asked Lev Yakovitch what he ate. He gave the terrible answer: "I don't know—soup, potatoes, a cutlet." Whatever it was it was evidently so tasteless that it left no memory.

For breakfast, when Lev is working on the first shift, he gets up at five and has tea and bread. When he is on the second shift, which begins at two in the afternoon—and he alternates shifts every week—he sometimes adds to his breakfast something warmed up from the night before. No doubt a cutlet. At the mill he is one of the workers supposed to snatch his meal while still at the machine (in this way saving the thirty minutes allowed for himself), and here of course he eats something cold—bread and, possibly, a slice of meat. After two he goes down into the Moscow Association of Consumers' Coöperative Restaurant attached to the factory; and here he gets what is very often his main meal of the day.

This restaurant is a bare, stone-floored room, with whitewashed walls, linoleum-covered tables, and benches. You take your fork and knife from a box

as you enter the door. At the far end is a long open counter looking into a communal kitchen, where you see men and girls in white hauling food out of enormous pans and kettles. The room is full of men in shaggy fur coats, heavy boots, their hats on, often eating with their wives and families, all shoveling it in. They buy a cutlet and a whacking big plate of gruel, then mash it up with their fork. It's just food—something to stoke you, keep you going; don't look at it, just push it in. But at that the food is honest and wholesome. And remarkably cheap. In this communal "hash-house," where the scarlet banner on the wall says that "food coöperation opens the way to a new life," Lev Yakovitch, as a member of the factory, can get a dinner composed of two meat courses for seventeen cents. Here are some individual prices, all in cents:

Tea with sugar (per glass)	2½
Tea in pot	6
Bread kvass, bottle	7½
Boiled milk, glass	4½
Sour milk, with sugar, glass	7
Sweet cheese, piece	7½
Compote fruit, glass	4
White (?) bread, loaf	3½

For those not working in the factory a two-meat course dinner can be had for twenty-five cents, the price being cut to fifteen cents if the customer is satisfied with one meat course. The meat, be it known, usually appears in cutlet disguise.

The part that food plays in Lev's budget even at these cheap prices is quite large. He and his wife each make \$35 a month. Of that they pay two per cent to the Trade Union—to say nothing of the periodic "voluntary" loans, municipal or state. One of these took from a half to the whole of a month's salary from nearly every Moscow worker last year. The Yakovitches must count out \$13.50 a month for the rent of their room and for the nurse who looks after their two children. The rest is for food, clothes, books, and amusements.

These factory meals are cheaper than home-cooked meals, and that is the reason why so many Russians do nearly all their eating in these low-priced coöperative restaurants. But it is estimated that, at the very lowest figure, five mouths in Moscow cost about \$45 a month. Lev, Valya, and their two children have just about \$10 a month left for clothes, amusements, etc.

But they have no doctor's bills to pay. When Valya has a baby she gets two months off from work both before and after the event. (I often wonder why Russian

working girls don't have a baby every year.) And every so often their Trade Union gives them free tickets to the best theaters in Moscow.

They are close to the bare existence "line," and probably will remain there. This is the life of the average Russian workman to-day.

VII

WHEN A WORKER SHOPS

WHILE THE MOSTORG, THE OLD MUIR & MERRILEES department store, which is now the Soviet Union's prize department store, is cluttered with terrible "new-art" wall embroideries, imitation bronze busts of Lenin sandwiched in between trumpeting elephants, naked nymphs, metal houris, and twelve-cup tea services, the Moscow Associated Consumers' Coöperative Store attached to the First Russian Textile Printing Mill confines itself to a more utilitarian line of goods. This store is in the Zamoskvoretsky "rayon," a mill district of Moscow. It sells everything from salmon to socks.

The bread counter is the most popular. Three aproned men wearing black astrakhan caps stand behind it. The most expensive bread is the almost-white "boulkys," four and five cents each. And if you touch one to see if it is hot and soft, as I did, a man will reprimand you. "Don't touch that," he will say. "It is not right to touch bread that other people may eat with your dirty fingers." It was a rule of the store.

Black bread was two cents a pound, gray two and a

half. Taking his knife to wait on a customer, the salesman carved out a crisp-crust triangle from a gray loaf two feet in diameter.

Peasants were buying bread, rolling it up in a dirty cloth, and stuffing it down inside their sheepskin coats, next to their stomachs. What, I thought, was the use of the clean fingers. Strings of workmen and workwomen were coming in from the factory. And as virtually every woman in Soviet Russia works there was an equality between the sexes in their shopping. In Russia, when a workman comes home, his "old woman" hasn't been getting his dinner; they get that together.

The meat counter was not doing a big business. It never does. But beefsteak was being sold for twenty cents a pound, hamburg steak for forty-six, good ham forty-four, bacon twenty-eight. This was at the "good" counter. At a rather ambiguous board there was ham which sold for only twenty-seven cents a pound. First-class sturgeon sold for sixty-one cents a pound, second grade for thirty. Very poor imitation Swiss cheese fetched the remarkable price of sixty cents a pound. A one-pound tin of tomatoes was sixteen cents. Carrots were three cents a pound, small tangerine oranges eight cents each, mediocre lemons twelve cents each.

These, mark you, were for people whose average salary could not have exceeded \$30 a month.

There was no question of getting these goods for less elsewhere, because the coöperatives sell whatever they stock at the cheapest prices on the market. The greatest difference existing between the coöperatives is the question of supply. For instance, during the last months of 1928 and the beginning of 1929 it was almost impossible to get a yard of cotton cloth in the Mostorg, Moscow's biggest department store. You could probably find the reason for this in the unusual high export of cotton goods during the first quarter of the 1928-29 Soviet fiscal year. They were being used to bring in some foreign exchange. And you can see the need for such balancing of trade when you notice that a low-grade sweater containing a little Australian wool sells in the Moscow shops for \$18.

On the other hand, a fairly decent suit of clothes can often be had for \$25. No one can understand that, except possibly the gentlemen on the Peoples' Commissariat of Trade who rig the prices. What we lose on the swings we make up on the roundabouts. This is all quite legitimate and even praiseworthy. At any rate, as far as actual necessities are concerned, the co-operative store prices are held down to the lowest possible.

The worker earning \$25 a month usually pays little for his room; his share of it, that is. But even so, with beefsteak at twenty-two cents a pound, ham at forty-

four, and the poorest grade of Beluga fish at thirty-two, it can be seen that food prices are formidable. One understands the Russian's passion for bread.

Girls' slippers of a very poor grade sell for five and eight dollars, men's rough shoes for five dollars, low tans of fair cut and workmanship for nine, and knee-high black Russian boots, the commonest foot-gear, for seven, eight, and nine dollars. Sporty black shoes with suede tops fetch eleven dollars.

Men's cotton socks cost from seventy-five cents to twice that a pair, women's imitation silk stockings are \$2.75. These stockings are probably the most outrageously high priced; they are quite transparent, very coarse, and wouldn't cost fifty cents in New York. Silk stockings are antisocial, I suppose. A pair of real silk even of poor quality cost \$6.

When a knitted sweater and a man's suit or overcoat call for almost the same money, one hesitates to compare prices. They are as out of proportion as the usual cubist drawing. They don't seem to make sense, except, possibly, to their creator. They are rigged mercilessly now to make both ends meet—the Soviet financial and the peoples' needs. One outfit of clothes must cost Lev Yakovitch two months' salary.

This explains perhaps why whenever I see Lev at home, in his club, or sitting before his machine in the mill he is always wearing the same pair of trousers.

They are black with thin white stripes, and they were obviously designed for the lower half of a morning suit.

Lev, it seems, has a suit for every day in the week. This is it.

VIII

A WORKER'S STRONGHOLD

V
LADIMIR, TO ME, WILL ALWAYS BE A SLOVENLY little plaster town on the top of a muddy hill, the plains below dotted with pools from an early thaw, and one long street running from the low white walls of its uninspiring kremlin [citadel] to the high plastered bastions of its twelfth-century "Golden Gates." This street, now called the Third International, was packed high with the winter snow, and covered for its full length with an unbroken layer of brown horse dung. The snow was melting, running in gulleys to the pools which in most places flood the sidewalk. The inhabitants were shoveling more snow off the roofs in the wet sunshine and digging channels to let it flow down the hill. A parade of the Red Army was passing as we first came up this hill; a few officers on horseback, some trudging infantry slopping along, trying to hold the skirts of their overcoats out of the slush, the boots of the man behind splattering the back of the soldier in front of him; a detachment of ski-ers, skis over their shoulders; a straggling machine-gun detachment, the gun-stands mounted on sleds made of skis; one or two

green pieces of field artillery; more straggling troops. And then we were allowed to go to our hotel.

The Hotel Progress was so progressive that it even refused to accept visitors. A visit to the Vladimir Soviet was necessary, I saw. After the secretary of the Soviet had assured the manager that it was imperative to be polite to a foreigner, despite the fact that he might look strange, I was given a room with seven beds in it. Each of them, trying them as I did one after another, I found densely populated with bedbugs.

I should not mention these bedbugs, or even the primeval state of the Hotel Progress toilets, were it not for the fact that their universality is a most important commentary on Soviet ideology. In fact, many visitors to Soviet Russia, bitten and chewed until they are afraid to sit down, have been unable to clear their judgment because of their personal discomforts. They attach, think the Communists, too much importance to such material things. On the other hand, what is civilization? It was strange, I reflected, trying to wash and dry my hands and face at the communal tap, without letting my cake of soap touch the appalling sink, that after eleven years of absolute freedom the proletarian toilet behind me was infinitely more filthy than any cage in a zoo.

In this respect, with its strange contrasts of filth and scholarship, misery and idealism, Vladimir, once

the capital of Russia, presented an amazing portrait of a Slav provincial town. Along the dung-coated Third International Street was a theater giving "Faust";—directly across from it was the twelfth-century Uspenski Cathedral, treasure house of the famous Rublov frescoes with the grinning skeleton of the first Grand Duke of Vladimir, Andrey Bogolubski, staring up from its glass case. Beside it, looking down across the vast plains, stands the delightful little Church of St. Dimitry, with Asiatic lions and horsemen galloping along the bas-relief of its paneled walls. Further down along the same street are two tiny museums with some of the finest silks, brocades, and ikons in all the world. In one of these museums I found the director of the theater buying the jewel-studded coverings of the ikons so that his players might have real jewels for their head-dresses. And when I came out into the street I found a weeping peasant girl carrying a child's pink coffin under her arm.

Another funeral passed down the dung-covered street that morning. It was like a procession of the Fates. Two women in black came along with the white coffin-lid on their heads, followed by a woman holding a tiny wooden cross, two priests in silvered robes, who kept stopping and turning to swing censers of incense and to chant "Hallelujahs" at the corpse of an old



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THE DEFENDER

Who tempts those who labor and are oppressed by fables about bliss after death? Who is it?—(*Soviet Poster*)

woman. It lay in a white board coffin filled in with paper flowers, borne on the shoulders of four weeping crones. The waxy face of the dead woman stared sightlessly to where crows, disturbed from the street, circled overhead in the wet wintry sky. . . . And as the coffin crept along blaring brassy loud speakers attached to corner walls talked, lectured, and played classical music.

At 3 o'clock, when the first mill-shift let out, the dining-room of the Hotel Progress was packed with workers. To amuse and instruct them another loud-speaker roared in our ears as we ate. Its harsh bark had something of the proletarian arrogance in it, for Vladimir, be it known, is the capital of a province which contains three-fourths of the textile mills in all Russia. There was no mistaking the triumph in the tone of that radio, yelling about "culture" and "coöperation." There was no mistaking the brusque complacency of the workers who thronged that low-ceilinged room. They were intensely virile and self-satisfied. There was a terrific mass consciousness about them, something exceedingly difficult to put a name to, but it was there. I noted it in the expression of their faces, in the way they ate with their hats on, in the attitude of the waiters serving them smoking cigarettes, in the flourish of one waiter's heavy knife lopping off hunks of bread, in the

voice of another who came balancing five plates of soup, and roaring: "Clear the way, Citizens! Clear the way, Citizens!"

The Red Army band came in and played while we ate, took a collective table in the corner, swallowed hot soup and cabbage, and then filled the room with the blare of brass and the booming of drums. Mass—and power! Workers! "Comrades!" shouts the radio. The jostle of bodies—a girl laughs hoarsely. Bang! wham! goes the bread knife—into a slab four feet long.

"Clear the way, Citizens!"

Outside the frost glistens like a death shroud on the painted frescoes of the churches. The pearled kerchief of the Virgin is a head-dress for Vera the soubrette. The peasants go slushing down the dirty street in their plaited birch bark shoes.

This is ancient Vladimir, once the capital of Russia.

IX

DEFENDERS OF LABOR

THE FABKOM, THE FACTORY COMMITTEE OF THE First Russian Textile Printing Mill, was in session. It was composed of thirteen members, eight men and five women. Four men and one woman were full-time members receiving \$67.50 a month, over twice the average worker's wages, as committee pay. The others were still employed as workers in the mill. All of them go up for election every year. They form a "cell" of the Textile Labor Union; and their chief duties in this mill were: (1) to defend the economic rights of the workers, (2) to enforce labor laws, (3) to represent the workers in the "collective" bargain made for their wages each year.

Nine members, eight men and one woman, were the committee sitting on this day. They sat in the dark hall of one of the mill's tenements, around a scarlet-clothed table, under pictures of Lenin, Rykov, Stalin, and Tomsky. One brilliant electric bulb hung over their heads. The women, men, and babies of the tenement formed a circle around them.

"Comrades," said the President, a burly worker

dressed in purple velvet blouse and black astrakhan hat. "We are here sufficient to open our meeting."

"'Ullo! 'Ullo! 'Ullo!" barked a radio from over his head. It was from the "Pioneer Pravda," the Russian Boy Scouts' newspaper. "'Ullo! 'Ullo!" A band struck up on the radio and played "The Call." "Tovarishi! 'Ullo! A separate country in Fascist Italy called the Vatican . . . 'Ullo! . . . A fortnight's campaign for increasing our investments—put your money into cash deposits instead of vodka . . . 'Ullo! School children from Tver organized a sport society to ski. . . ."

The Fabkom and members of the tenement sat there immobile. They were not listening to the howls of the radio, but they did not show disrespect for it because it was an "invention," a symbol of Russian progress. Here was a voice coming through the air, and music, to workers, some of whom were even in bed in their rooms. A mother feeding her child at the breast pointed to show it the loud speaker. Another tenement dweller shoved through our group carrying a tin basin full of his night's food, which he had just cooked on the communal stove. An old peasant pushed out from a room, like a bear, rubbing his circle of whiskers and hair, and sat down on one of the hall benches. The radio stopped and the woman member of the committee stood up.

"I shall talk for half an hour," she admitted, smiling through the useless spectacles on the end of her nose. "All right," said the members of the committee. They produced pencils and paper, frowned officially, and began to make notes.

"A great work has been carried on since my last report ten months ago. The committee has sent delegates to the children's garden, to the day nursery, the dining-room, the dispensary, and the hospital named Semashko. Delegates have watched over the sanitary conditions in the mill; laboring clothes have been distributed to the workmen and workwomen." "Not to me!" interrupted a bystander. "I—!" He was told he would have his turn to talk later on. "The committee succeeded in arranging to have twenty-two workmen sent to health resorts. Four delicate children were sent to the Crimea, twenty-nine to sanatoriums, forty-two to rest houses, twenty-six to a tuberculosis hospital. The doctors made 6,799 calls . . . 594 spectacles were distributed . . . 20 places for mothers in the Volodsky mill day nursery . . . our own full . . . 102,000 rubles were spent for ventilation. But one must confess that things were not done very well—" "I'll say they weren't!" shouted another bystander. "And 150,000 rubles more are requested. . . . One must note the high number of people who have been ill during the last ten months; eighty-eight per cent in the cotton

printing, eighty-eight in the dyeing, eighty-one in the drying department—such a great percentage of sickness must be explained by the large number of inhabitants in one room and by the delicate health of many of the workers.”

In the tenement in which we were sitting there was an average of seven people to one room.

Comrade Morozkina, the woman speaker, proposed to end her report by reading eight solid pages of a labor inspector’s report. She was prevailed upon not to, and the questions began.

“Morozkina, why don’t we have enough tea jugs in our coöperative?”

“Morozkina, why don’t we have more hot water taps in our mill? Instead of going to the dining-room we should be able to have it in our mill. Besides that we want tables and wardrobes for our coats. You promised that, but nothing’s done yet.”

“Morozkina, what measures have been taken to prevent accidents? Many people are sick because the door of our room won’t close. We called a carpenter who scratched his head and didn’t do anything because it was too cold outside, something like 35 below zero.”

“I want to say,” began a member of the Fabkom, “I want to say that our administration is useless. It was to supervise the work of the ventilation but never did it. Instead of watching over the interests of the work-

ing class they neglect them. Our engineers walk around the factory and give orders to clear away heaps of snow, but they never pay any attention to serious things, such as ventilators for instance. This thing is inexcusable. What do we pay them for?"

"So many thousand rubles spent," sighed a woman, "just so many thousand lost. Isn't it a shame?"

Comrade Morozkina smiled benignly. She was a wonderful speaker. She knew it. She answered her questioners, always with her kind smile. She promised to do everything in her power to satisfy the demands of the workers. Those demands were very important indeed. She then took advantage of a lull to read the eight typewritten pages of the labor inspector's report.

A young girl came out of the room at my side and stared at her dully. Then came a young man coughing, and a shaggy old man shuffling along. Some children played among the forest of booted feet. Two girls on a bench down the hall giggled and tickled each other. Doors opened and people came out carrying dishes to wash. Others drifted back carrying bowls of soup. A nervously afflicted child in front of me kept rubbing his forefinger over and over his upper gums. Partly dressed girls edged through us on their way to the communal toilet. . . . And the Fabkom talked on and on. . . .

X

"STAND IN LINE!"

YOU HAVE NOT MADE THE ACQUAINTANCE OF Soviet Russia until you have stood in a queue. But as you have to stand in a queue for nearly everything you do here, even if you take your lady friend to the "family" bath, you need not worry about that. The queue is not a Soviet invention. I saw a queue here in Moscow in 1917, just before the revolution, that went twice round a block. Policemen were superintending it, preventing the lines from getting tangled. The people were waiting to buy footgear.

No, the queue is something much more deep-rooted than that. It is a significant example of Russian character. There will always be queues here in Russia because Russians just naturally stand in line. It is in their nature. In the first place they are patient, and in the second they do not organize. They never do anything simply if they can possibly do it otherwise. For instance, the theater box-offices are open from ten or eleven each morning until four in the afternoon. But do the Russians buy their tickets then? Yes, a few, probably Baltic Russians with some taint of foreign

blood in their veins. But what do the real Russians do? They wait. Then suddenly they feel a desire to go to the theater—just about twenty minutes before the show starts.

They rush for the trolley. There is a whole mob of people waiting for the car. But they get aboard, they squeeze themselves in. In Russia the conductor stands by the door, and passengers must mount by the back platform and go out by the front. The back of the car is usually a squeezed mass of people trying to buy tickets from the conductor, who must nick each ticket opposite the mark of the station the passenger got on at. Those who have seats keep blowing their breath on the window panes to make holes through the quarter-inch casing of hoar frost so that they can see what is going past them in the streets. And then, through the hole, they see their theater approaching them and all rise and rush at the same time.

They fight their way out of the front door. They dash for the theater. One of a party stands in line to buy the tickets while the others go to check their hats, coats, and goloshes, this checking being required by law. They stand in line patiently. As the time for the show to start draws near they suddenly lose control of themselves and charge the cloak-room attendants. For there is no such thing as coming in late to a theater in Russia. When the curtain goes up the doors close.

Nothing and nobody will get them open again until the end of the act.

But then the Russian theaters are so excellent, so fresh and reviving, that it is worth this ordeal to get into them. They do open their ticket windows in the morning, but they have too few of them; and the tickets, printed in sections on long sheets of paper, have to be cut off as they are sold. After the play the patrons have to line up to get their clothes back again; and those in front and actually in possession of the coats, hats, goloshes, and gloves have to fight their way out. At one theater here in Moscow, in the Dome Soviet, I have stood in line thirty minutes trying to recover my hat.

The bread, butter, milk, and grocery queues one sees in all Moscow and Leningrad streets have an economic reason—too little supply. But here again it is mostly a question of poor organizing, wretched distribution. And when the people do get inside the store everything is made as difficult as possible for them. First they have to secure the attention of an attendant and inspect their proposed purchase and ask its price. Then they must go to the desk and buy a check for exactly that amount, after which they have to line up again to get back to the attendant, who thereupon either has their package ready for them or makes them select the order all over again. All this is done to make sure that a buyer does

not get his package and run out of the shop without paying.

The railroads are the worst wasters of time and patience. They begin selling tickets for a particular train only a little while before it starts. The shortness of this selling period varies with the truculence and independence of the local authorities. At Saratov on the lower Volga I stood in line to buy a ferry ticket to take me across the river to the German "republic." The tiny steamer hooted, the gangway was partly pulled in, forty patient Russians stood behind me, and the man behind the wicket was writing out ticket forms by hand. He was filling in something—an invariable curse accompanying all tickets for transportation in Russia.

However, the people do get into the theaters, they do catch their steamboats and trains, and sometimes—when there's enough to go round—they do get their butter, bread, eggs, milk, and other supplies.

A hole of any sort, a ticket window, gate, archway, any office draws them with a fatal magnetism. After watching them mob such places day after day you are ready to believe that Russians just naturally don't know how to get through a door.

There are two great arches, flanking the Iberian Virgin, that lead into the Red Square. One of these is always empty, through the other pours a solid stream of

human beings. Like a ceaseless passage of ants. All day long. Pushing, jostling, shouldering each other, getting in each other's way. The empty arch is only thirty feet off, but it never occurs to the Russians to use it. Not unless ten other Russians did. Then there would be a stampede.

XI

DIVORCE—\$3.50

IT TAKES LESS TIME TO GET MARRIED IN SOVIET Russia than it takes to buy a pound of coöperative bread. And as for a pound of fresh butter—why, you can get a divorce in half the time.

The Saks Bureau of Kiev, for instance, is on the third floor of a district police station. It is a small room, about twenty feet square, cut in half by a board counter. On one side of this counter sit two clerks. On the other stands a perpetual line of matrimony seekers, divorce applicants, people registering births, others registering deaths. A birth or death costs a little over a nickel, marriage is a dollar, a divorce is three dollars and a half. It is a little more if one comes alone to be divorced, as there is the cost of the postage for notifying the absent partner of the fact that he or she has been freed.

On the day that I sat behind the Saks counter in Kiev I saw a birth, a marriage, a divorce, and a death all officially attested to and completed according to the regulations within less than one hour. The marriage pair complained because they had to wait while there was the settlement of some flaw in the divorce. But I

clocked them from single state into man and wife in seventeen minutes thirty-two seconds flat. Rather slow, I believe, for the Kiev course.

It wasn't exactly a flaw in the divorce proceedings; it was merely a peculiar coincidence. The girl, a 19-year old movie ticket-taker, had come to get a divorce by herself. Her husband, she said, was not in Kiev, and the clerk was filling out the form on that supposition. He was just taking down the husband's address, so that he could write him the news, when that glowering young gentleman walked in. He had come in, as a matter of fact, to get a divorce himself. The delay in the proceedings was as to which one would now pay for it. Asked why they wanted to be parted, they said that they had just lost their taste for each other.

They gave this information voluntarily, for under Soviet law a couple is not obliged to give any reason for wanting a divorce. A man can divorce his wife, or she him, five minutes after marriage. But if a man makes a habit of doing this, say, after one or two days of married life, he will find himself doing time in jail under the charge of rape.

In this particular Kiev district marriages averaged from 200 to 250 a month, divorces from 40 to 50. Most of the divorces were due to the discovery of venereal disease. In such cases the authorities not only approve of divorce, they strongly advocate it. Unmarried

people living together are considered married, and there is no social stigma whatever attached to the parties. The children of such a union are considered to be as legitimate as any others. The father is bound to contribute to their support whether he continues living with the woman or not.

This brings to mind a famous Moscow case. It was a hot summer day in the park. Ivan Vassilich was reading his paper on a bench. He looked up and saw that a girl with a small child was standing in front of him.

"Don't you remember me?" she asked.

He racked his brains for a moment, then he remembered. "Why, of course," he said, smiling. "Didn't I have tea with you two years ago?"

The girl smiled and sat down. It was wonderful to have met again. She took down his name and address, and then she walked around to the Saks Bureau and registered him as the father of her child. Frantic at the charge, the young man rushed to his lawyer. "Why I've hardly set eyes on her!" he declared.

"But did you have tea with her two years ago?"

"Well—er—yes."

The lawyer shook his head sadly. "In that case, I am afraid, you will have to pay."

There was nothing startling like that on my day in the Saks bureau of Kiev. A couple did come in who had been divorced four years before—to get married again.

They grinned a little sheepishly at the policeman by the door. The man started to take off his cap, thought better of it, lighted a cigarette instead. He stood there with it dangling between his lips as he told his address and vocation, nodding when the clerk read out the bit wherein both parties to the marriage admit that they know the penalty for falsification as to previous marriage. The only emotion he showed was when the clerk insisted that this should be regarded as a second marriage, instead of a renewal of the old one. A second marriage means fifty cents more. Then he and his shawl-headed wife signed the book, gave the clerk three rubles, and walked out; the stub of the cigarette still dangling from the man's lips.

It was like watching people buy so many tons of coal.

* * * * *

A week later I saw a different kind of wedding. We were driving home from the steppes behind Odessa. The air was full of the talk of hunger and disturbance, peasant outbreaks. We had just left a village where the people were quite "ugly." Then, in a little village by another dead salt lagoon, we came on peasants dancing. The wedding guests were dancing to an accordion in the dirt yard of the bridegroom's mud-walled house. The bride, surrounded by a ring of jolly peasants, wore a white wedding veil and a wreath of wax orange blos-



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soms. The bridegroom and best men all had sprigs of wax orange blossoms in their buttonholes. They insisted that we come into their house.

They sat us down at the wedding table. Nearby was the whitewashed stove, on the clay top of which was the bridal bed. The bride and bridegroom, sitting under two bright ikons, gave us wine. He made a speech, our Russian driver made a speech; we drank to their health and happiness. They cut the cake, which was a large loaf of brown bread, and they set out cabbage, meat, and baked apples. While we ate this ceremoniously the accordion player whooped it up in the crowd of peasants packed behind us. The girls among them started singing, like a chorus of birds. The little whitewashed mud cabin was full of the thrill of life. The girl bride was so excited that, when asked it, she forgot her new name. The other girls shrieked at her confusion. We left them still dancing in the yard, in the glow of the sinking sun. They told us they were going to dance and sing all night.

Their civil registration had taken place at the Saks Bureau three days before, but their real wedding had been in the village church that morning. It is a matter of opinion, of course, but I know which wedding I'd like best.

XII

THE STATE-RUN HOTEL

I SHALL NEVER FORGET THE HOTEL LONDON IN Odessa. No, never! It is one of the wonders of this world. It is one of the most imaginative places I have ever been in.

The day I arrived they told me, for instance, that my room would be four rubles. By the time I got to my room I was told that I would be charged another fifty kopeks for an extra bed. Once inside my bedroom door, the concierge told me that he had forgotten and the price of the room was really five rubles; and I would have to pay for it every day before 5 o'clock, when the office closed. Otherwise there would be an accumulative tax of twenty-five per cent.

Tacked on the wall of my room was a notice saying that the bedclothes were three rubles a week. When I rang for hot water to shave, the maid tried to charge me thirty kopeks. They charged thirty kopeks for filling my wife's hot-water bottle, although they didn't get it. I said I would die first. This marked an ebb in the price-tide, during which I successfully refused to pay the bedclothes tax of three rubles. Then the tide surged

back and the waiter put on fifteen per cent for serving my morning tea. I said: "You tell the proprietor he knows what he can do with that."

"But it isn't the Khazan," protested the shaven-headed varlet. "I put that on there myself."

"What for?"

"For walking upstairs."

"Well then, when you walk down again you take it off."

Conversations like that go on all day. The hotel, you see, is run by the State. But a nepman—that is, an adherent of the new economic policy in Russia—owns the restaurant. If hot water is brought in to you from the restaurant, it comes in a teapot, and is charged for at tea-tariff rate—fifteen cents. It is just a try-on; the foreigner or *tovarish* [comrade] might be thoughtless enough to pay the check without examining it. They are very naive about it all.

The hotel has all sorts of guests. There is a notice by the desk saying that all non-registered inmates must leave the premises by 2 A. M. This refers to the three fancy ladies who sit in the restaurant all day—and most of the night. Since the introduction of the new Soviet marriage laws their profession has become almost obsolete, though they still carry on.

The Russians eat luncheon any time between two and six o'clock. After that there is a gap, a hiatus, a

pause during which the dark wooden dining-room is almost as deserted as a morgue. The prices after six o'clock more than double themselves. But that is not the reason for the silence. The comrades are recuperating. They begin to straggle back again about ten o'clock. The violinist enters in his fur coat and golf cap. The pianist takes off her sweater. They go to it, playing with the abandon of modern Russian music, in which the only thing that seems to count is speed and sharpness.

Saturday night is the great night because then the Hotel London's restaurant has the only cabaret in Odessa. At least, they call it that. And then, about 2 A. M., this ancient city by the Black Sea reaches the zenith of its night life.

Odessa is much richer in queer abnormal comrades than the cities inland like Kiev. You see faces, heads, and costumes around you that appear to have no relation to each other. The men have more hair attached to different parts of their faces than they have on the tops of their heads. The women wear furs, or low-necks, or sweaters, it makes no difference which. Some of them bring their babies, which the men balance on their palms in exaggerated moments of gaiety while their mothers scream. But there is no universal gaiety. Each party is self-contained. Joy is not communal, not in Russia.

They all sit and clutch their heads, looking as lonely as the two carp in the goldfish tank. The nepman proprietor, an old man with a face like a frog, walks up and down in the manner of a mourner. He needn't mourn; he is selling a dime's worth of caviare for \$1.25. Hardly a dish is less than that, and this in a country where a Communist's salary is limited by law to \$90 a month. But the Communists can be absolved from this bacchanalia of Odessa. Most of them are in bed, or still working.

You can tell that they are not good Communists, because good Communists do not drink hard liquor, not in public, and most of the tables here have little vodka carafes on them. Beer is also greatly in demand. On one table stand eight empty bottles before two arguing comrades. Other comrades in black *rubashkas* sit in dark alcoves so discreetly hidden that the waiters can hardly see to serve them. Potted palms stand before the alcoves, beside the pink marble columns and green plaster walls. The electric bulbs, always feeble in Russia, throw a dim light over it all. The violinist, just finished with a shot of vodka given to him by an admiring diner, plays rapidly, loudly, and mechanically through "Madam Butterfly" and "She's My Baby."

It is two o'clock. The cabaret has begun. The men who have girls are dancing in and out among the tables. Life is on the crest of the wave.

Two men, who have been eyeing me steadily, come over and sit down at my table. They are Potash and Perlmutter, an Abe and Mawruss of Odessa, of whom there are many. They are nepmen, they tell me almost instantly. They also tell me that they run a soda-water factory.

"Life is fine," says one.

"It's rotten," says the other.

"Well, anyway, you gotta admit it's better for the Jews."

"Maybe." Then to me: "Please, you ain't eating any cake?"

They ask me why the Americans do not lend them money. I reply that it is because they haven't yet paid what they already owe us.

"That's right," says Abe.

"Is it?" retorts Mawruss. "You wait. This is the biggest country in the world—we ain't afraid of nobody."

XIII

HUNGER

THERE HAD BEEN A DROUGHT. THE CROPS HAD failed. The carts were coming in across the steppes to Odessa to buy bread. They were coming in along the hard-packed dirt trails beside the salt lagoons. Dirt roads, rutted, hard as iron, shiny from lack of rain. The carts were full of chickens, ducks, geese. The peasants, wrapped in fur coats and shawls against the shrill wind, sat on top of the crates. The horses' ribs stuck out. Scrawny foals trotted along beside their plodding mothers. Some of the carts had been four days on the way.

"Dear one!" cried a peasant when I asked her why she had come such a long distance, "we have come to buy bread."

Their village coöperative, she said, had not been able to supply them since September. She had twenty-four chickens in a crate and ten white geese in the straw-filled bottom of the cart. She expected to get a ruble fifty kopecks a pair for the chickens and three rubles fifty for the geese—about \$18. She had come eighty miles.

It was no use asking her why she didn't stay at home and eat her own chickens and ducks. She wanted bread. Bread was the only real food. If bread went wrong then the whole world went wrong. She cried when she unrolled a dirty cloth and showed me the bread she had been eating on the way, crumbling cornbread. That wasn't bread, she sobbed, wiping her old eyes.

We drove on. The carts came towards us over the sky-line like a nation on trek. A man with a cart full of cornstalks had come fifty miles. It would take him another day to get into Odessa. Rich peasants bumped along in carts full of poultry, sitting on their covered crates, glaring at us over their heavy beards and fur collars, as if we meant, somehow, to take their wealth away from them. We passed the skeleton of a dead horse, a dog still tearing a last piece of flesh from the red-streaked bones.

The steppe was like a seascape. A vast sea of black earth. There was nothing on it. The ultimate horizon was as flat as a line. Distance gave it mistiness, a sense of everlasting expanse. There was nothing to break the monotony. Balls of dead brush rolled and bounded across the earth like fleeing wraiths, rolling before the flat wind for hundreds of miles. There was nothing to stop them.

We came to a village. It lay beside a salt lagoon in a depression of the steppe. Its houses were built of clay

and yellow shell-limestone. There was a crowd of peasants, a dark mass, crowded before the village co-operative store. They were all grumbling. When we asked the price of bread they looked at us, raised their voices, and said that there was none. Their voices rose higher. They pressed round us, their hairy faces forming a staring ring.

There wasn't any bread! "Go inside and look!" they shouted, pointing into the dark interior of the squalid coöperative. And they pointed accusingly. "How do they expect us to live!"

We went on, always passing the long line of wooden carts. Sometimes they came in batches—five, ten, fifteen carts from some distant village. Some came singly across the steppe. Some with one horse, some with pairs, some with *troikas*. They showed us the chaff they were feeding their horses, jeered, flung a handful recklessly up into the air.

At the far end of the lagoon lay a large settlement of 1500 souls. We saw the white blocks of its houses a long distance off. White blocks along the yellow clay of the lagoon topped with the bulk and jade-green towers of its Ukrainian Church. The road ruts deepened as we approached it, roads splaying in from the high level of the steppe. As we entered its great square we passed an ancient Turkish mosque.

It was Sunday, the day of the village bazaar. In a

square that must have been fully a quarter-mile long stood a few peasant carts. They stood in a straggling line at the upper end before the coöperative store. A mass of peasants surged around them. Peasants dressed in homespun and high leather boots, shaggy fur caps that came down almost over their eyes. Some of the carts were full of cabbages, one held a barrel of wine. There was a red rubber tube sticking out of the bung-hole of the barrel, from which the owner filled cups and glasses. Peasants were tottering about it in the mob, and one, leaning against the wine-cart wheel, was being vilely sick.

"Bread!" they cried. "Ha! ha! Listen to him! Devil take you! Bread? Why, where *is* it? Who's got it? Who's eating it? Last year we got white bread for six kopecks a foont! ¹ This year black bread is fourteen kopecks, and we don't get that! Look at him!"

They pointed to a German-speaking Jew, standing, apologetically, in his stall in the village bazaar. He had an open sack of chestnuts, a pan of apples, a few cakes of colored soap, some sickly-looking candy, and a large slab of gray bread. The bread was like an exhibit. It sat in glory on top of the counter, every one looking at it.

¹ A foont is fourteen and a half ounces. A kopek was then, 1929, worth about half a cent.

"Look at it!" yelled the infuriated peasants. "That isn't even white, and he wants twenty-three kopecks a foont." They touched the sacred bread which was baked in clusters, like biscuits, each one supposed to be a foont. "Yaw, and his foont isn't even a foont!"

The Jew came around, his red nose dripping in the cold wind, and explained that if life was miserable nowadays it was because the Jews were persecuted. They weren't allowed to grow rich, as all good Jews should. Pointing to the dark door of the little coöperative at his back, he said that if the others didn't like his prices they could buy in there.

"Pfui!" said a peasant woman, "you ought to be ashamed. You know there isn't enough for all of us in there."

She had four bits of colored cotton in her podgy hand. She was a fat creature. She was going to make a dress.

"But there isn't enough," we protested, comparing her bulk with the small piece of red cloth.

"That's all they would sell me. I'll have to use other bits to make it up."

The peasants wouldn't believe there was any shortage of food and cloth in the cities. The worker, they knew, was getting his allowance of twenty-two ounces of bread a day—at coöperative prices. They were being

cheated, the city worker was being favored. They shouted about it.

"Don't lie! We've all been drinking. Tell the American the truth. Da—yes! The last man in Russia is the peasant."

XIV

THE HOUSE IN THE WOODS

ABOUT FIFTEEN MILES OUTSIDE KIEV IN THE HEART of a silent oak forest lies the old Feofany monastery—a Byzantine creation of turbaned domes, cupolas, and sharp spires like witches' hats; colored bright green, white, and red; popping up out of the dark forest. Once it was the home of the Black monks. But they are dispossessed now; you can see them working like ordinary peasants in the wooded rolling fields, an angry look in their eyes; bearded men in skirts and strange bee-hive hats, greasy hair hanging down their bent backs. Never, almost, since the beginning of history have priests been treated like this; for not only have they been driven from their home, but their home is actually practising what they once preached. It offers a refuge to homeless children.

One of these, Ivan Ivanovitch Goueff, came out to greet us; out to the edge of their own immediate clump of dark woods to where our 18-year-old American motorcar was stuck in a field. Ivan Ivanovitch was President of the Children's Colony. He was sixteen years old. He came from the Chernigoff district of the

Ukraine. His parents had died, he had wandered from his village, lived as a waif [Bez Prizorny] for three months in the streets of Kiev, sleeping in ruined buildings, alleys, and asphalt ovens, until caught by the police. They had sent him out to Feofany, where, instead of running away to rejoin the adventurous life of Russia's "little savages," he had settled down, become a Pioneer—a Communist Boy Scout—and been chosen president at the semi-annual elections.

He was a snub-nosed, pock-marked, grinning youth. His man's overcoat reached almost to his feet, the sleeves hanging beyond his hands like a Chinaman's robe, but his manners were quite easy and cordial. He walked with us through the smooth-floored oak woods, took us into the colony's dormitory, showed us the girls' rooms. Each had five and six white cots, with postcards and family photographs stuck upright on paper-covered tables, and lithographs of Lenin and Rykov all over the walls. In one room there were six pictures of Lenin alone. Then the President took us through the workshops, where children were being taught carpentry, elemental mechanics, and shoemaking. The shoemaking school was a particularly pleasant spot, with an old cobbler sitting on his low stool at the end of a long bench, around which were his pupils. They were down in a clean cellar, industriously stitching and tapping away at big Russian boots. They

were learning a trade that in three years would allow them to go out in the world again and get good work in the shoe factories.

Their tales were pathetically similar. Parents dead. So many days, weeks, months, even years, wandering as homeless children. Some had been picked up after five days on the streets; some of the girls had come straight from their own homes to the children's home in Kiev. There was one little urchin twelve years old, who had wandered all over Russia as a Bez Prizorny. He had the marks of it yet—that queer, not-of-your world look of those wretched deserted children, many of whom simply refuse to be reclaimed. When we asked him how he liked the colony he did not show enthusiasm.

"*Nitchevo*," he grinned, impishly. "It's better than the streets when it's raining."

Another boy, a hunchback, had drifted away from his home on the Volga during the famine of 1921. He had gone off with his elder brother. His brother had died in Briansk. He had been captured in Kiev. "They got me there," he said sourly.

These children have a farm, horses, cattle. I asked one pretty girl of sixteen what she did. She replied: "Pigs." These children have regular school hours, classes alternating during the summer time between school work and farm work. They can stay there until they are eighteen years old. Then the Feofany manage-

ment gets them a job—and washes its hands of them.

The usual institution atmosphere, the thing that Jack London called “the iron heel of organized charity,” was not present in Feofany. The children were allowed to govern themselves; at least, there was the semblance of such self-government. Enough to let them think they really were doing it. Their curriculum was planned, however, by a Feofany Soviet composed of sixteen teachers and two pupils. President Ivan Ivanovitch, Secretary Lydia Pavlovna (thirteen years old), and six committees of children with four or five on each, controlled and inspected such things as Work, Sanitation, Household, Classes, and Club.

The head of the Sanitation Committee was a beautiful pansy-eyed Odessa girl rejoicing in the name of Tamara Alexandrovna Visheny.

As I walked about with these children I remembered a conversation with Jim Larkin, in Dublin. That fighting leader of the Irish dockers had told me that Soviet Russia was Heaven.

He pointed out of the Workers' Union in Marlborough Street at Dublin's slum children. “Look at 'em!” he roared. They were standing in line with their pinched mothers waiting in a queue to get bread a half-cent cheaper a loaf than in ordinary stores. “By God! You'll not see that in Russia!”



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THE SECRET OF CHRIST

—(Soviet Poster)

Well, I did. I've seen queues in Moscow that went halfway down a block. But there was a difference. In Russia mothers stand in line and children go hungry because there isn't always enough bread to go around. But what Jim Larkin was talking about was another thing. There was plenty of bread in his country.

I believe that if there was enough bread in Russia to go around no child would ever go hungry there. It is against the whole idea of the Soviet State. But the Soviet State has other ideas which are not quite so admirable, and one of them relates to the mental food which it feeds its children.

In order to encourage the Feofany youngsters to be first-rate Communists and eternal wagers of class war, one room of their club was lined with posters depicting Englishmen chopping off the heads of negroes, and drinking whiskey and sodas while others were tortured; Americans and Britons executing Chinese; and Germans, Poles, Bulgars, Rumanians, and White Russians holding assorted pogroms on their various working classes and minorities. There was a violent lithograph of the French burning the Riffs at the stake in Morocco. This chamber of horrors, full of "bad examples," such as black-jacks, knuckle-dusters, and knives taken from juvenile criminals, was part of the Soviet programme to inculcate and inflame hate. It was a room in which

no child could be expected to ask very much more than their usual eager question: "When will the revolution start in America?"

The Soviet certainly puts bread into the children's stomachs, whenever it can; but it also puts poison into their minds.

XV

A PROLETARIAN TRIAL

"BUT WE LOVED EACH OTHER!" SAID THE WIFE.

"Then why did he stab you?" asked the judge. It was a question which every one in the court thought very sensible, but the wife found it hard to answer. The judge put it simply, speaking as one woman to another, without any legal verbiage and with a sincere desire to get at the truth.

The scene was the long, putty-colored plaster hall of the Kiev Tribunal. The defendant was a policeman, twenty-six years old, who had stabbed his wife because he said she had deceived him with another man. The accuser was the State, trying the policeman to ascertain whether or not his attempt at murder was premeditated. The chief witness was the man's wife, a pretty plump blonde, nineteen years old. She had married the policeman when she was fifteen and had a baby two years old.

The judge was twenty-nine. Formerly she had been a tailor. She had joined the Communist Party in 1917, studied law five years, working three days each week meanwhile at her trade. And now she was a full-

fledged judge. Six times within the last three years she had given the death sentence, although five of these decisions had been set aside by a higher court. She was elected to her position in the Kiev court by the proletariat. In this particular case she had the power to give a sentence of from one day to eight years. There was no jury.

But there were two auxiliary judges, elected by the working people to sit with the diplomaed judge. The assistant judges both worked in a print shop. One was a Young Communist about twenty-two years old. The other was a serious young fellow of about thirty. They would hear and vote on this case—the best two out of three deciding it—and then they would return to the print shop. The Young Communist wore an ordinary business suit, with gray flannel shirt and green knitted necktie. The lady judge had bobbed hair, and wore an open silk shirtwaist under her fur-trimmed blue coat. The board-floored court was high and cold.

The prisoner, the policeman, sat in the dock at the court's left, wrapped in a heavy black overcoat. His lawyer, given him by the State, sat directly below him. There was a wooden box opposite for the *procureur*, a Soviet cross between a prosecuting attorney and an official observer; but this box was not filled to-day as the case was not considered important. The judge ful-

filled the double function of judge and State prosecutor.

The courtroom was full of peasants, workers from the shoe factory in which the girl worked, and her relatives. Some of them were dressed in ragged sheepskin coats. All of them were quiet, respectful, serious. The girl's mother, rather a flashy-looking woman with plaid dress and orange toque, sat in the front row holding the two-year-old baby in her lap.

But there was another spectator in the court—a bandit. He sat right behind the policeman on trial, awaiting his turn to be tried next. He would go on at about 3 o'clock. Now it was only eleven. He was a gloomy, pale, good-looking young peasant of about twenty. He grinned cynically as the policeman told how he had been made a cuckold. He glanced with a faint sneer at the three armed soldiers guarding the door at his left. All this bother about a botched stabbing when really the only thing that mattered in the whole world was what was going to happen to him. He frowned. This was a mere case between husband and wife. But with a bandit—ah, his crime could be turned into an offense against the State, and for that the penalty was death!

The policeman told his story. Told it sullenly without looking at any one in the court. He had found out

that his wife had been playing about with another man; yes, and—well, he had tried to kill her. He couldn't remember whether he had thought about it for a long time or not. That was all.

The wife was called. She came in, fresh and pink, through the corridor door. She wore high black boots, cotton stockings, and a plain blue fur-trimmed coat exactly like the judge's. She had a green woolen scarf wrapped round her blonde hair and chin. She smiled at the judge. The judge did not smile back. She told the girl to get on with the story. "Liar!" blurted out the husband. The judge looked at him reprovingly, the prisoner relapsed in gloom, his hand rubbing the bristles of his shaven bullet head. The girl-wife said that once he had tried to cut her throat with a razor.

"But I thought you had said he always loved you?" asked the judge.

"I know. I—" the girl faltered.

"When did he try to kill you with a razor?"

"I—I can't remember."

The judge leaned forward ever so slightly and narrowed her eyes.

"You mean to say you can't remember when he tried to cut your throat?"

Then those of us sitting beside the girl saw her do a most peculiar thing. She slumped in the witness-box and the weight seemed to go off her legs, as if they

were weak. Her voice which had been bold became faltering and hoarse. She turned, almost appealingly, to the unseeing stare of her husband, as if asking him to back her up.

"What kind of a knife did he stab you with?" asked the judge.

"I don't know. When he sat down to dinner he had a knife in his pocket. I didn't know whether it was for the dinner—or for me."

"I see."

The judge's tone said plainer than her words that she didn't see. She was giving the girl the lie, and every one in the courtroom knew it, including the girl. The witness floundered in her testimony. She contradicted herself. And here, in the courts of Europe and America, is where the lawyers would have come in. They would have tried to find some technicality, some complexity, on which to divert the case. But not so in this primitive procedure of the Soviet. The Court had the girl on the run; she was lying, and the court knew it. The girl felt the weight of truth, she felt the eyes of all the peasants and workers boring into her back. She turned again toward the unseeing stare of her husband.

"He loved me!" she cried. "You ask him! After he had stabbed me he held me in his arms, and he said: 'Thank God, the knife didn't find your heart!'"

The judge smiled then and stood up. She gave the

court a recess. And her slow smile as she looked at the girl-wife made plain the coming decision. I thought I could read in her smile the damning judgment: "You have no heart."

XVI

SINS OF THE MOTHERS

IN SOVIET RUSSIA A MOTHER CAN TAKE HER BABY TO prison with her if she wants to. She can keep it there until it is four years old, after which the State will take charge of it, place it in some children's home, and return it to the mother after she has done her time. And as both prison and nursery are usually much superior to the baby's own squalid home, a Russian baby in prison has as much fun as Russian babies outside, if not more.

Immediately inside the door of the yellow-brick women's prison in Kiev is a nursery. A clean, well-swept room full of wooden cribs, each with a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes, like a hot water bottle, with only its head sticking out. There were sixteen of these cots in the very young babies' room. In one was a new-born infant. It had just been brought down from its mother, who was feeding it herself up in a prison room. She was doing four years because she threw sulphuric acid at her husband's eyes, so that he might never see another woman.

In the other room of the *creche* were babies from one

year to four. They were all clean, fat, and healthy. At the end of one wooden cot I read: "Valia Inztberg." Valia was three years old, the daughter of an unsuccessful abortionist who was doing four years, although, as her mother told me herself, it was a put-up job between her husband and his lady friend to frame her, to get her out of the way. She wept a little as she told me this, because Valia would have to go out next year, being three years old now and her mother having two still to go.

Once a week in the Kiev prison the mothers are allowed to have their babies to play with for two hours. At other times they are taken care of by the three trained nurses of the *creche*, assisted by "trusty" women prisoners themselves. They are taken out in the prison garden and aired daily. So far as his knowledge of his whereabouts was concerned, the acid-thrower's little son, just born in the Kiev prison, might have been lying in a mansion on Fifth Avenue. Valia, the abortionist's daughter, was, perhaps, beginning to wonder. She lay there rolled up like a cocoon in her clean blankets studying me closely with her round innocent blue eyes. Her head was shaved. She might have been a little boy. She was almost a neutral thing in this house of punishment, unaffected and unaffecting, quite unaware of the irony of the fact that the laughing "trusty," tucking her in, was also an abortionist.

In Soviet Russia everything is done to make a prison homelike. The women's rooms there at Kiev were not cells. The doors were not barred, and the prisoners walked about the corridors as they wanted. They lived collectively, ten and twelve in a room; the place was like a dormitory or the servants' quarters of some big hotel. The women were dressed in ordinary clothes, they had flowers and photographs on the tables by their beds. They sat on their beds, dressed as if to go out because the prison was cold. But some of them were not going to leave there for ten years.

Still, to me there was a sinister cloud of evil in the air. Perhaps it came from the fact that these people had committed horrible crimes and were not receiving due punishment, at least not as our Western eyes see crime and punishment.

The maximum sentence under the Soviet law for a crime other than one against the State is ten years. But there is a startling discrepancy in the different sentences. Such a strange evaluation of crime. The Soviets seem to see no difference between a mutilation, murder, slow poisoning, minor theft, and the making of illicit vodka.

In the first room, for instance, was a murderess who had killed the child of her husband's mistress. She had taken the woman into her home, and persuaded her to have the baby born there in order to get control of

the child. An evil, scheming, beady-eyed hag, she was doing only four years. Another woman, an acid-thrower, who had blinded her husband, was serving three. She was a shriveled, bitter-faced shrew. The third was a full-bosomed, ripe young blonde, wicked perhaps despite her wide blue eyes. She was in for the same stretch as the acid-thrower—three years—for having been caught stealing a second time. This girl was a waitress who had stolen and sold some coats from a cloak-room. The sentence was heavy because the Russians come down heavily for a second offense.

In an upstairs room was a murderess, a thief, two madams from different brothels, another acid-thrower, an abortionist, a herb-doctor, and a girl bandit. The thief was a young girl who could not have been more than seventeen. One of the madams was a scarlet-faced, leering creature well past fifty. The Russian Communist with me shouted with glee when he saw her sitting on her bed.

"I'm glad to see her here! She lived in the same building that I did. She had apartment No. 1, and I had No. 3. There was a row going on in her place all the time. Police coming in at all hours of the night!" He turned to her. "How long have *you* got to sit here?"

"Five years."

The woman grinned at him, showing a mouthful of bad teeth. She was wearing a gray sweater over a bulg-

ing blouse, and her gray head was wrapped in a magenta scarf. She pointed her sewing needle at the other weeping madam.

"Look at her! She's got a chicken's heart! Listen to the way she is bellowing, and all she got was four months."

The other woman, weeping melodramatically, swore that she would never go inside a brothel again, much less keep one. And one of the most amazing episodes of the whole afternoon was the effect of these tears, which persuaded the visiting *procureur* who was with me to release her on the spot!

The girl bandit eyed all this with a disdain aloof and aristocratic. She was a slender young woman of twenty, with brown bobbed hair and a brilliant bandanna tied around her head. In company with some young men, whose names she would not divulge, she had held up a peasant village at the point of a revolver. A very serious crime—six years.

The abortionist had made a miscue. The girl patient had died. And the abortionist had no license. Eight months.

The young girl thief wrapped a woolen shawl about her body and sank back on her bed against the wall. She hadn't stolen the goods, she said; she had merely sold them for the girl who had. She was going to be in prison for a year and she asked the woman advocate

with me to write a letter for her to her home. She wanted her coat—it was so cold in these stone walls—and she could not write.

The murderess was a blonde of about thirty. Her yellow hair was brushed straight back from a pale freckled forehead. Her eyes, blue and wide, had no expression. You couldn't see anything in their depths, because they had no depths; they were like a china doll's. She was serving ten years for helping her husband kill a man. She had been in two. I asked her what prison her husband was in.

"Oh, he's out," she smiled.

"Out! And you're serving ten?"

She smiled at me icily, swinging one plump, brown-stockinged leg over the other. She smiled at the prison warden when he said: "She is bad. In for robbery once before."

She turned then to the table beside her bed and began to roll a cigarette. On the table was the picture of a peasant wedding group; girls in stiff white frocks, booted men in stiff black. She was standing beside her husband holding a bouquet of spring flowers in her hands.

There was such a feeling of boredom throughout this prison that only the herb-doctor seemed to feel even sorry for herself. She gave us her back when we came to her bed, her face to the wall. She turned once

and looked at us, her eyes watery and red. We did not ask her about her strange medicines that she had been caught giving to men. She was doing only four months. A quack love-doctor was a nonentity among the distinguished company we were in.

Nor did we converse with the thrower of sulphuric acid, who had aimed at her husband's eyes, missed, and blinded another man. The warder said women can't throw anyway.

XVII

GOOD FOR EVIL

IN ONE OF THE BARRACK-LIKE ROOMS OF THE KIEV No. 1 prison were three convicts. One was a murderer serving four years. Another was a horse thief serving eight. And the third was an embezzler doing ten. The sentences seemed the wrong way around, but, from the Soviet point of view, they were ethically correct. The murderer, in a moment of passion, had stabbed his brother-in-law because he had been maltreating his wife, the murderer's sister. He had come to her rescue; there was something almost noble in such a deed. The horse thief was a professional who had made his living robbing the peasants. He was dangerous to the neighborhood. And the embezzler had stolen 32,000 rubles of the State funds. His was the worst crime of all, from the Soviet point of view, because he was an enemy in the merciless war they were waging against official corruption.

You have to know the old Russia to understand this last case. Under the Czars every official had his price, and old Mr. Graft was a partner to every contract. During the period 1919-21 the Soviets shot corrupt



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THE ONE-TIME IDOLS OF THE PRIESTS

—(Soviet Poster)

officials out of hand. Now they give them the limit every time they get a chance. That is why you can spend two months in Russia nowadays without once hearing the word graft.

Ten years is the limit under Soviet law. The man who had stolen 32,000 rubles was really lucky despite the fact that he had been given five years in Siberia on top of his prison sentence and a further six years during which he would be deprived of all rights of citizenship, including the privilege of belonging to a trade union. If he had been a Communist he would have been shot. Communists are punished heavily for any crime because they are supposed to set good examples, being the vanguard of the proletariat.

Ten years is not a wide range within which to allocate punishment for the world's scale of crime. To Western minds, especially those who have never been in prison themselves, ten years seems all too short. But the Russians work on the Marxian idea that no criminal deserves punishment, he being an unfortunate who should be educated, assisted, and placed in a different environment. No Russian will ever believe that a man commits a crime because of anything in himself. It must have been the circumstances and surroundings. If criminals are shown a better way of living they will not continue in the life of crime. People in prison, therefore, should be made more comfortable than in

their own homes. That explains perhaps the happy-go-lucky life of the 600 convicts in Kiev No. 1 prison, over 450 of whom were murderers.

"And what did you do?" asked the warder, slapping one of them on the back.

"Ah—I killed a peasant."

It seemed to be a universal excuse. The average murderer seemed to be serving four years. When he robbed under arms he usually got ten. That is the limit for murder in the Soviet Union, except for murder against the State. If a rich peasant, a kulak, murders a local newspaper correspondent the kulak will get death, as all newspapers are run by the State. As far as that goes, when the circumstances seem to warrant it, any crime from theft to rape can be, and has been, construed as against the State.

Kiev No. 1 prison is a large stone and brick structure, like a textile mill. The prisoners live collectively, ten and twenty in a room, like soldiers in barracks. In fact the rooms full of brown-blanketed cots and the presence of many prisoners (such as deserters from the Red Army) walking about in old uniforms, made one rub one's eyes for a moment. They wore any kind of clothing they had—fur coats, soldiers' helmets, sailors' hats.

They usually smiled when we asked them what they had done, as if half proud of their crimes. But some

said they had not done anything at all, and they could not think why they were there. One, admitting that he had committed no crime, explained that he was in for being a parasite, a drone in his village. He was doing three years.

In Kiev No. 1 a prisoner worked an eight-hour day, was paid one third of the outside rate for his work, got one day rebate off his sentence for every two worked. His family was partly supported by the State.

They had a theater, with raised platform, curtains, painted backdrop, and rows of well-polished audience benches, where they could act their own plays. They had a newspaper, "The Voice of the Prison," and a club. Their diversions were mental rather than physical; they did not seem to play any outdoor games.

The hospital left nothing to be desired. But it was a gruesome spot for all its cleanliness and sanitation. The prisoners were separated into disease groups—eye, ear, intestinal, venereal, mental. In one room was a pyromaniac, a fidgety creature, always pawing his scraggly beard and quivering lips. He was drawing designs, an art he had just begun to learn, and his magnum opus so far was a scroll enclosing the names of his three children—Pietor, Marie, Alexi. Sitting on the next cot was a staring, cross-eyed monstrosity with a head twice too big for his body; he had burned down his cabin with his peasant father inside it. Another was a red-

bearded hooligan who had killed a man in the street. He didn't know why. And then there was the room of the "furious mads," who stared at us through little holes in their doors. I shall not soon forget those mad single eyes pressed into the three-inch peep-holes.

The prison was something like a laboratory where the State was trying an experiment upon itself—the dangerous experiment of putting the Marxian theory to the test.

XVIII

PRISONERS ON PAROLE

RUSSIANS ARE THEORISTS PAR EXCELLENCE. THE great difference between them and other theorists is that they, at least present-day Russians, invariably put their theories to the test. And surely one of the most amazing of these adventurous experiments must be the Rubieshowska Penal Colony outside of Kiev, where a well-behaved murderer can get two months' vacation every year.

We arrived there just at sundown on the day when they were having their fortnightly bath. Most of the men prisoners were collected in one of their downstairs sleeping rooms, fresh and rosy, cheerful after the hour's sweat in hot steam. They were standing around their beds, each of which had a clean fortnightly sheet, a good deal like a football team dressing after a game. It was Saturday night, and to-morrow a third of them would be allowed to spend the day in town.

In fact the only penalty in this penal colony seemed to be that the prisoners were forced to stay there and work on the farm for a number of years. They dressed as they pleased, had their own horses and cattle to care

for, went to town to dispose of their produce. Imagine a truck farm outside of Chicago run entirely by prisoners dressed in ordinary clothes, who enjoy two months' vacation a year. Imagine also the shock we got in the stable, where we were looking at some fine draft-mares, when we learned that our guide was a murderer serving five years.

The penal home was an old-fashioned stone country mansion at the end of a long oak-lined driveway off the main road. There was a grove of horse-chestnuts around the farm, giving a truly rural effect; the barns and ploughed fields going off to a deep wood behind. Each room of the farmhouse was full of iron cots. None of the windows was barred. The front gates were locked, but this was more to keep people out than in. Escape was almost too easy because this was an honor colony in every sense of the word. During the six years since its inception some fifteen men had tried to escape every year, and out of that lot all but fifteen had returned of their own will.

The prisoners ranged from petty army deserters to an aristocratic bank embezzler, whose black leather coat was trimmed with gray astrakhan collar and cuffs. There was a nepman who had falsified his store's cash returns, a true relic of Russia's surviving bourgeoisie. He also dressed in gray astrakhan, and was in for four years. A splendid figure of a man with fiery

red goatee turned out to have been the president of a village Soviet who had stolen the public funds. He was doing eighteen months. They gave us these details without shame; murderers telling whom they had killed, thieves saying how they had stolen wine, the banker merely smiling a little wryly at himself as he murmured that he was doing quite a long stretch of five years.

When we expressed our surprise at the high percentage of murderers in the prison—about eighty per cent—one of them merely gave a philosophical shrug, but another, as if to apologize for such callousness, said with a smile: "It is almost always love."

Love! The Rubieshowska Penal Colony has plenty of even that. In the summer there are usually some 350 men on the farm and about 40 women. They are not chaperoned. If the women wish to have love affairs with the men prisoners that is their own affair. They can meet in the fields. The authorities do not encourage this, they do not approve of promiscuity, and they insist that if such an affair does occur the couple remain faithful to each other. Married men are permitted to have their wives visit them a certain number of times a month for connubial relations. Women have equal rights. If a man has no wife he can present the prison authorities with a list of his lady friends who feel so disposed. They will go over this, send for the young

lady who meets with their approval, and turn their backs. The authorities even encourage this; they say it does away with one of the worst evils of the American and English old-fashioned penal systems. The solitary warder in charge is the prisoner's cupid.

Without a doubt it is the most delightful prison I have ever been in. The prisoners have an excellent theater. The walls are of course covered with lithographs of Lenin, Rykov, and other noted revolutionaries. There is a very sweet picture of Lenin as a child with long golden curls. The radio station tunes in with London, Paris, Berlin, and Stamboul. They tried to get the Turks for me the night I was there.

The women prisoners were also having their fortnightly bath, so I did not get an opportunity to see much of them. But they let my wife go into their steaming dark bath-house, where she talked with illicit vodka-makers, thieves, and one soulless creature who had abandoned a friend's child in Kiev. Some of them, in petticoats, were washing their other clothes. But most of them were dressed like Eve in the garden. With a few exceptions they were not very attractive, and this perhaps explained the success of one of the prison's most daring experiments. The authorities placed several of the male and female prisoners in circumstances where love-making seemed inevitable, but the

men refused. A true proof, said the prison authorities, of improved "tone" among the men.

Well, it is a jolly little penal colony for all that; and when Cupid—I mean the warder—let us out of the driveway gates, I felt certain that he would have much more use for a bow and arrow than for his regulation automatic.

XIX

IT HAPPENED IN A PASTRY SHOP

IT WAS A RAINY DAY IN KHARKOV, THE CAPITAL OF the Ukraine. Its cobbled streets were gullies of yellow water. People hurried by with their heads pulled in like turtles, drawn deep into the collars of their overcoats. They didn't have umbrellas, because an umbrella is a manufactured article and Russia was short of such things then.

We sat in a pastry shop, eating chocolate eclairs and cakes soaked in rum with spirals of whipped cream on top. We were drinking coffee *mélange*—and discussing its immorality; discussing in fact these glorious pastry shops of Odessa and Kiev which we used to return to each night after a day on the raw steppes, out among the villages where the people were driving from forty to eighty miles into Odessa to sell their ducks and chickens so that they could buy a few pounds of sour black bread.

Such things as gorgeous pastry shops and hunger, we decided, go arm in arm in this cruel world, even in Soviet Russia. It was life, so we selected a cream pastry with candied fruit on top.

"Why can't I have a glass of tea!"

We looked up and saw a tall old man standing by the cashier's desk. In Russia, you know, in the coöperatives, you have to buy your check before you are served. This old man stood before the girl cashier's coop with a 20-kopeck piece on his palsied palm. It had just been refused. Apart from his somewhat ragged shoes, he looked quite presentable. In fact, he was in appearance the most distinguished person in the shop. A fine old chap with Don Quixote mustache, white as snow, and a soft silvery beard. He wore a black astrakhan hat, and his blue overcoat had a collar of astrakhan.

"Why don't you take my money?"

When he said this for the third time the girl turned and called to some one behind the counter of chocolate cream cakes. A man came out and seizing the old man by the arm gave it a twist. The old man growled and flung him off. He held out his 20-kopeck piece to the cashier.

"*Chi*," he said. "Tea."

By this time another man had come out from the back where he had been stacking meringues and cream puffs. He and the first man now each took an arm of the old chap. They both twisted.

"Swine!" yelled the old fellow.

It was a real yell. But it finished at the doors—

double doors because of the approach of winter—through which the two stalwart pastry partisans hurled him into the wet street. But he came back. He came to the outer door and tried to wrench it open. Then the first pastry puffer let the door go wide, and as it opened he kicked the old man in the stomach. We could not hear the old fellow's yell, the pastry puffers had slammed shut both doors.

But by now he had come along the glassfronted shop, past rows of pink birthday cakes with "Maries" and "Veras" iced on top, and here he opened another door. He was kicked in the stomach again.

How he could want to eat after all this only the Lord knows, but he scuttled back to the other door and tried that. Whereupon one of the pastry puffers, who had lurked in the street, hit him in the eye. The pastry man hit at him again but missed, and was seized by the crowd. The crowd was divided in its opinion. Some thought that it was wrong to kick an old man in the stomach—it wasn't culture—and the Russians are very particular about that. Being Russians, they had to argue about it.

"He's drunk," sniffed the cashier.

"He's not," said a tea-drinker. "He's just a little wrong in the head."

"Yes," laughed another. "It's more than tea he wants."

The old man was standing at the outside window just opposite our table, looking at our pastry with the candied fruit on top. His injured eye was weeping, the other going in sympathy.

He was weeping, yes, still he kept some of his dignity and all of his courage. The two young men together would not have made up his age, but he was only waiting a chance to come right back at them.

The crowd was getting deeper and deeper all round him. He wept some more when we went outside to ask him about his discomfiture, and when we suggested that he come in and have a glass of tea with us he accepted our offer instantly. He sat down at our table and took off his black astrakhan hat. Then all his naturally gentle manners came back to him.

He was a bit exhausted for the moment after his fight with the two pastry men. His crying, somehow, did not seem undignified, only tragic. He was almost spent.

"Drink your tea," we said.

The girl waitress put it down reproachfully and pointed to her hand. She too had got quite a bump in the fracas.

"Huh!" said the old man, "look at my eye!"

She was a good-natured creature and he bore her no malice. But every time he saw his old enemy, the huge pastry puffer, he twisted his white mustache in mock-

ery of that bravo's fierce black mustachios, and, pointing at him, remarked: "Swine!"

He drank his tea, bringing out of his pocket a small piece of grayish bread. One could see he was very hungry. Every now and then his sorrows would overcome him afresh and he would weep again. Quietly.

"This shop!" he said. "Ha! Oh, I had a beautiful shop. You should have seen my shop!"

Such cakes! he used to have. Wonderful vanilla ices! Liqueurs! Apricot brandy! And as he told us of it his sorrow overcame him completely. "It's gone! It's gone!" he cried. "They've taken it all away."

We stared at him embarrassed. What could one say to comfort a man who had lost such a magnificent shop? We could imagine its rich arcade in old Kharkov.

Then the poor old boy made his one mistake. He dug a bundle of papers from his pocket and fished one out. It was a sort of handbill on cheap yellow paper, such as are distributed in the streets, and it was a description of a little tobacco shop, which also sold that muddle of other things that such little places do sell—candy, soft drinks, newspapers. The saddest part of the whole affair was that little shop.

But the finest thing in his life now was the memory of that splendid, marvelous shop—which had never been.

XX

COMRADES AT PLAY

LENINGRAD'S SURVIVING NIGHT LIFE IS ON THE Hotel Europe roof. It is called a cabaret. A semi-American elevator boy takes you up.

"That's me. Sure thing. Where'd I learn to talk English? Why, right out in little old Seattle, U.S.A. Came back here—went broke—gotta stay—that's me. Sure I can get back if I want to—ain't done nothing wrong. How's things here? *Nitchevo*—guess these people don't know how to spend money, that's all. Fifth floor—far's I go—cabaret."

Fifth floor, uniformed cloak-boy waiting to take your coats. Give him twenty kopecks, ten cents, before he gives you your check. Watch him write the number on the bottom of your goloshes. Hundreds of goloshes. Hundreds of portfolios. Every comrade wears goloshes, carries portfolio, usually carries revolver. Waiters in white duck suits, canvas sneakers, rushing past with dishes of Salad Olivier. Head waiter in dinner jacket standing at foot of midnight cabaret stairs, claspng a menu in fat white hand, arguing just at present with red-headed comrade. Comrade dressed in

high black leather boots, trousers stuffed in, brown sweater under blue serge suit. Comrade tight as an owl—wants to know why he can't get in. His talk something like this:

"Wassat? Mean to tell me every table's engaged! Can't I see half a dozen empty ones myself? Huh! Bourgeois!—yah—that's what you are. Bourgeois! I'm gonna report you to the Waiters' Soulouse."

Head waiter turns pale, bows to comrade, gives him remote table far corner by the wall. Tells waiter to take his order, whispers waiter's ear take order—and forget it. Comrade sits there waiting. Looks both mad and uncomfortable. His short red hair lies down all around his head as if it had been poured off his skull. He is keeping only one eye open at a time.

His wife is dressed in a brown woolen garment. She wears white cotton stockings and high black buttoned kid boots. She has had a green woolen shawl wrapped around her head, but now she has it draped around her neck. She is telling her husband that he hasn't any "insides"—to let a bourgeois head waiter treat them like this. She's seen a lot of women on the Europaski roof in semi-silk and low-necks.

"So that's what the revolution's coming to!" she taunts her husband.

Her husband, being a man, having no feminine guile, smiles uncomfortably. The couple with him wait to see



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THE CHINESE SAMOVAR

Buddhism is a mainstay of capitalism in China, as are Christianity and Mohammedanism elsewhere.—(Soviet Poster)

what he will do. In the meantime the orchestra plays "Last night on the back porch I loved her most of all." Factory girls in skirts short to the point of disillusion now all do a perfectly ferocious Russian Charleston across the smooth, beautifully made, parquet floor. The orchestra is good, the food not too bad, yet there is something lacking. It is hard to put a name to it. There is a certain quality missing from the gaiety of comrades at play. "She was po-or—but she was honest—the vic-tim o-o-f a rich man's whim." Is it essential that there should be this element of "sin" to make night life gay? It doesn't make much difference what city you are in—Leningrad, Moscow, Saratov, Tiflis, Baku—any amount of the kick has gone out of night life simply because there is nothing going on that is corrupt. The whole thing is too beastly healthy. It's like dancing with your wife!

There is no "forbidden fruit," that is the tragedy of present-day Russia. That is the thing that makes boot-leg liquor so sweet. That is all gone.

In the old days Petrograd and Moscow were cities of a hundred cabarets. Yar's, Strelnas, the Aquarium, the Villa Rhodie. With girls dancing, private cabinets, the waiters bringing crawfish and vodka while you boasted. Anything and everything seemed possible then. Russia was the land of unlimited impossibilities. You might steal a general's girl, and a cossack's horse,

and race along the snow-speckled dark streets. But not now.

No, the three women of the oldest profession in the world who sit every night by themselves on the Hotel Europe roof are hard put to display some attraction that will compete with their orthodox sisters in tow of comrades so advanced. In fact, watching the night life, wondering what these sirens have to offer, you begin to wonder how they really can exist.

But the worst tragedy of Russian existence to-day is the fact that home life has been destroyed. The very climate helped to make old-time Russian home life one of the gayest of the world. Six long, long months of frozen winter; Leningrad (which was then St. Petersburg) and Moscow were almost shut off from the sun. Dark frozen streets. People riding out to parties in sleighs. Little sleighs, so small that the man had to hold the girl in with his arm round her waist (quite proper, it was the fashion in those days), galloping through the starry night and the flying snow. Smiling servants taking your coats at the door; and Russian servants felt cheated if their masters didn't incessantly entertain. The glittering drawing-room, bottles on the sideboard, low-necked, cool-armed women. The double windows rimmed you in. In all the world there was nothing so intimate as the "feel" and security of those

old Russian parties, with the terrible frozen winter outside.

They are—well, not quite gone. They exist. Not, of course, as the order of the day. Secretly very often; because the genius of proletarianism is opposed to such jollity as this. In Moscow, moreover, with three or four families in a single apartment, there simply is not room. But even if the proletarians had plenty of room they could not know the gaiety of old Russia.

They would not know how. The “play” of the comrades may be “healthier,” but it is horribly dull.

XXI

OLD THINGS

HE WAS NOT AN OLD MAN, THOUGH HIS WORN cheeks were covered with a stubble of white hairs. He peered behind him, up and down the hall, before he softly closed the door of my room.

"I have heard," he said, "that you are buying old things?"

My heart sank, for he was the third poor seeker who had been in my room that evening; and I could not stand sending these people away. How could I buy a bit of lace that was fondled so regretfully by the old lady who tried to sell it? Or tell this wretched man that his bronze ikons were worthless and could be picked up in the street markets for just one-tenth of the price he was asking? Bits of old belongings, treasured against such an evil day as this, pondered over, valued with the hope of what they might bring, had reached an incalculable value in his mind. It would be only cruel to encourage him.

"No," I said firmly, "I really do not want any bronze ikons. I only wish I did. But I have many already, and these are not old ones,"



ييز وه سرمايه صاحيبلاري اينقيلاب ايچن چاليشان قهرمانلاري آغير اَشكه نجه در آلتندا نه زيورلر.
ملك وسرمايه دارلار انقلاب اوچون چاليشان قهرمانلاري آفر اشكنجه لره ساليملار.
بايلار وپولدارلاره اينقيلاب اوچون گوره شن قهرمانلاري آغير عذابلارا ساليملار.

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Landowners and capitalists are oppressing with severe tortures the heroes of the revolution.—(Soviet Poster)

He smiled. "I do not know," he said. "I—I thought you might like them?"

I shook my head. It was best to be firm.

"But this—" Watching my face, in the hope of seeing some desire roused, he unwrapped a grimy wooden ikon. An indistinct slab, almost obliterated by years of candle smoke; the kneeling figures of two saints before a bronze cross set into the wood. It was very heavy, very ugly.

I steeled myself. "It's quite nice," I said, "but—"

His lips froze in a glassy grin and my heart failed me. I put the ikon on the floor, sat down on my bed, stared at it. I was trying to think. I did not want the ikon; I hated it.

"It's not old," I said.

"I don't know. My father bought it from the monastery. I remember it when I was a boy. It was supposed to be very valuable. But I don't know anything about the value of ikons. I'll take what you think it is worth."

This was awful. Now I had to name its price. I thought that it was worth about five rubles.

"Have you always lived here?" I asked.

"Yes. I was born here. Our—our property was here. Then of course I went to the university in St. Petersburg and—"

St. Petersburg! That name dated it all. He changed it quickly to Leningrad even as he spoke, as if afraid

I might suspect him of anti-Soviet leanings. He had a tendency to stand up and finger his hat, which was very embarrassing.

"Twenty-five rubles," he said suddenly.

I shook my head. "Look here," I told him, "I don't want to bargain with you. It's not a question of the price. It just doesn't please me, that's all."

"Twenty."

I shook my head again and stared at the ikon lying on the floor. Visions rose before me: the government commission shop in Leningrad, old vases and crested cigarette cases, opera cloaks, an old music-box turned on for a customer and tinkling out a forgotten waltz. I thought of the old man I had talked with that very morning, trying to sell me ancient prints, photographs, even illustrations he had torn out of some books. Eleven years now since the revolution, and these people still had a few trinkets to sell.

My visitor spoke: "Fifteen—no, take it."

"Don't!" I said, getting up. "I'll buy it. In fact, I think I like it very much."

He suddenly sucked in his breath. "Thank you!" He thrust my money into his pocket. "It is very difficult to live."

He went to the door, opened it a crack, looked down the hall. Then the door closed behind him.

"Yes," said the ikon-restorer in Moscow, later, "it's

not much good. Eighteenth century at the best. But this bronze cross, the figure of Christ, this is excellent; sixteenth I should say. It's worth about twenty-five rubles."

I felt sick. The old man had come into my room in Rostoff and gone out, and I did not even know his name.

XXII

ORDEAL OF THE MONKS

“WAIT A MOMENT, LITTLE PIGEON!”

Two black monks were down behind the door of their deserted monastery. They were cutting a pane of glass to patch a hole. One of them held a candle in his hand, the other was measuring. They were waiting for a third monk who had gone off to draw water. He appeared as I waited outside the monastery in the cold winter night. He came up through the snows from the sighing pine woods along the shores of Lake Ilman. He was entirely black—black beard, black eyes, black cone hat, black flowing skirts. He was carrying a wooden yoke with two ice-coated water-buckets dangling from its ends. He stared at me with either surprise or hate, I could not tell which.

“You are too late,” he said coldly.

I didn’t know whether he meant that I was too late in the night or in the epoch of the Georgiev monastery. Anyway, he did not mean to let me in until the Communist with me handed him a letter from the *Ispolkom* of Novgorod. He held it up near the broken hole in the

door and read it. Then he called to his brother monks to let us in.

"American," he said, pointing at me, as if it were a password. The two monks stood up, their long greasy hair falling down over their shoulders. They did not smile. But one of them lifted up his candle, and as he did so the darkness lightened overhead and I saw the faces of old saints staring down at us. It gave me the strange feeling of being some character in a tale of the Middle Ages. For the Georgiev monastery is remote from this world. You see it as you cross the Velkhov going into old Novgorod—a long line of white set in the pine forest far up the low right bank, its ten bright golden domes sitting like a cluster of tangerines on the black tips of the wood.

To get there we had driven in little sleighs across the frozen flat country, walked along a dark tree-lined dyke road, where the shrill wind had swept the snow bare, where frozen pools of water lay on either side of us. Our own faces were freezing. We had seen two peasant women washing clothes through a hole chopped in the ice. We had come through snow drifts to the wall of the monastery, entered a courtyard where some horses were being unharnessed and a great pile of steaming manure was melting and staining the snows, where a surly peasant cursed when we asked a question.

"Damned if I know where the monks are," he said.

The peasants do not like monks. Or priests. If you doubt that make a list of a hundred Russian proverbs—that condensed philosophy of peasants—and you will find that most of them are sacrilegious. For instance:

“Be born, baptized, marry, and die—and you will pay the priest for all of it.”

“The monk has the beard of an apostle—and the mustache of the devil.”

“Don’t worry when a priest enters your house—and he will soon start to beg.”

“God loves the rich and the rich love God.”

And then that terrible blasphemy so popular in Moscow: “Everyone steals except Christ—and he would if His hands were not nailed to the Cross.”

These proverbs indicate many of the reasons why the church failed in Russia; why, for instance, the Feofany monastery outside Kiev is now a refuge for homeless children; why out of the hundred and twenty monks who once inhabited Georgiev only eight are left.

“Where are the others?” I asked.

“Oh, they’ve gone,” quickly put in the Communist.

I did not ask him where. I had an idea that many of them had gone to a place whence they could never come back. But the monk, struggling with a massive key, favored us both with a glare, as if daring us to put

that question openly. He was obeying the Communist and the request of the Novgorod *Ispolkom* to show me Georgiev monastery, but he was letting us know that he detested the lot of us. We were infidels.

His defiance had more than a personal significance. It was symptomatic of the Russian priesthood of to-day, in which only the strongest can survive. Under this Bolshevik atheistic rule the church is having its trial by fire; its disciples are suffering a martyrdom. It had become too fat in the days of the Czars. It worked for them and not for Christ. A few priests or monks might have stood out for Christian principles, but the church as a whole was preaching future glories instead of trying to alleviate the misery on earth. The Communists declare that the church tried to drug the people into acquiescence, into hoping only for the world to come. Beside that famous Iberian Virgin in Moscow the Red authorities placed the placard which repeats the sacred Marxian maxim: "Religion is the opiate of the people."

The Georgiev monastery is like a walled city—a great church honeycombed with smaller churches. Its ornate chapels are in tiers, one above another. They have jeweled ikons of silver and gold. Even in that cold darkness they gave a warm sense of assurance and richness. They might have been garish in a brighter light, but by that one flickering candle the monastery

glowed like a treasure vault beside the barren shores of Lake Ilman.

There were ikons in the log houses of the wretched little fishing villages beside the frozen lake. I saw them. I sat in an old log cabin with the local shoemaker, a man so poor that he had not even bread. His four children were sleeping like a litter of foxes, half naked, huddled together for warmth among the fusty bedding on top of his clay stove. His cabin was so low that my head almost touched the ceiling, so badly repaired that we could feel the winds off the frozen lake. And yet in one corner were three shining silver ikons. I saw another trio of ikons in the cabin of an old fisherman; they held the place of honor in his log-walled home. He showed them to me, smiling proudly; he was still a Christian.

It was not so much that the Russians had lost their faith in God as it was that they were bitterly dissatisfied with these latter-day priests who attempted to interpret Him. Now they were going to Him direct, and not through the priests. It occurred to me as we drove through the snows away from the dark frozen lake and the Georgiev monastery, white and silent as a ghost in the black night, that whatever might happen to the surviving eight monks this ordeal was probably the best thing that could have happened to the decadent Russian church.



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This is the way "civilized" capitalists are treating the laborers in the colonies.—(Soviet Poster)

XXIII

DAVIDOV THE RESTORER

"I LOVE IT, LOVE IT, LOVE IT! IT'S THE FINEST IKON IN all the world!"

Davidov the restorer leaned over the thirteenth-century ikon of St. Nicholas, an ancient wooden ikon as big as a door. He dipped his brush in a special preparation of spirits and smeared it over the jeweled robe of the saint. Then he struck a match and lighted it. We watched him with utter horror. The flame died, Davidov dipped the brush in another bottle of spirits and rubbed it over the hot paint. As he rubbed, the precious robe turned into yellow scum, all except the row of raised jewels. Davidov smiled and gave a flick to the curly ends of his red mustache. His blue eyes lighted with a cold fire as he looked down on his destruction. He leaned over it with a surgeon's scalpel in his delicate fingers, then began scraping away the softened paint.

"Look! One—two—three—four—five." And there was still another robe! It came from under the surface of the old one, or the newer one, rather, that might have been put on one or two hundred years later. "Five

—six.” Davidov counted the new jewels as they appeared; he was getting back to the original, getting down through the paint to nearly eight hundred years ago.

It savored of black magic, except that all the world around was blanketed with white snow, and we were in the little Russian town of Novgorod. That is, it is only a town now, but in the days when this ikon was being created Novgorod was one of the greatest cities in the world. Its churches and its merchants were laden with gold. The austere white walls of its great St. Sophia had been standing nearly two hundred years. Novgorod had a factory of its own over on the Norse island of Wisby. It was trading with Byzantium, the Arab East, the Black Sea to the south, the German West, the Scandinavian North. There were nearly 400,000 people within its great walls then. All of that was in this ikon, in the colors, the freedom, the richness. No wonder that Davidov, as he removed coat after coat of paint—he removed eight surfaces to get down to the original—no wonder as the colors richened and deepened and the expression on Nicholas’s face became nobler and purer—no wonder that Davidov gasped and cried out in his tiny little workshop above the ikon museum. For he was traveling backward through history, uncovering with his hands eight hundred years!

Incredible and fascinating sight! Davidov was actually removing only one superimposed ikon at a time. Why didn't his little surgeon's scalpel scrape through? When the paint softened, how was it that he could take off a painting of six hundred years ago and leave the one that had been done a hundred years before that? It was the strength of the spirit, explained Davidov. This was a soft spirit, a special combination, which had been timed to soften only one coat of paint. If he had put on a hard spirit, then the greatest ikon in the world would have been lost.

St. Nicholas had come from Asia Minor. His face on the golden ikon was tanned, his forehead domed and high, his nose sharp and aquiline. His hair was scant, short and gray, and he wore a close-clipped gray beard. But his eyes—that was what one saw as one went back through the ikons. It was what the moderns could not get—his eyes burning with a holy fire.

Over a hundred men were supposed to have worked on the great ikon. Around the central plaque sixteen square panels showed events in his life. They showed his birth, his ordainment, his entrance into his ministry. He reached an Eastern city—you saw him above the bowed populace—gifts were bought for him—a man led a horse, and both horse and man knelt down before him. He crossed a sea—done in beautiful cream waves—and above him three black devils dangled by

their legs. They were supposed to represent three catastrophes that had befallen him on the way. Them he must have overcome, for another panel showed him turning the government of a great city over to a humble peasant—an object lesson in humility.

Davidov had worked over a year on this ikon. He had taken hundreds of photographs, which somehow enabled him to divine whether there was another painting underneath each successive coat. He had rubbed off eight distinct ikons, and with each one Nicholas had become more miraculous, so that now Davidov stood shaking his head over his finished work, saying: "I love it, love it, love it—it's the finest ikon in all the world!"

Below in the Novgorod museum of ikons were other specimens constituting the finest collection in existence. It is well worth going halfway round the world to see them, for an ikon is a most satisfying form of art. It grows upon you more than any other. Ikons make other forms of art seem sensual and garish. They go down deep, down to a sort of pure flame of beauty and austerity—a purity tarnished by succeeding centuries.

You can see this in Novgorod, and it is perhaps the one place in the world where you can see it most strikingly, because many of these restored ikons have not been exhibited. You see it in the faces of "The Praying Novgoroders" or in that vivid epitome of ancient war-



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Sights to rejoice the peasant's heart. On the left, his friends. On the right, his enemies. [The tractor is among the friendly birds and animals.] — (Soviet Poster)

fare, "The Siege of Novgorod by the Suzdal Troops." Ikons vivid with both feeling and color show Novgoroders sallying out from their castelated walls against the blue-helmeted Suzdal troops, flights of arrows going into the advancing horsemen. Inspired artists were creating these things in Novgorod at the same time that King John of England and his knights were gnawing bones in their banquet halls. There was fervor and glory in these ikons of Russia until they felt Western influence. Also here in Novgorod you can see the fleshy saints of Simon Ushakov looking like stuffed Dutchmen, their eyes cynical and scheming.

So Novgorod to-day is only a remote Russian country town by its frozen river. The red walls of its kremlin still stand up across the white snows, the great golden helmet of St. Sophia still shines like a sun against the cold sky. But it is a stranger, like an old ikon itself; strange, old, almost effaced. And in a little room over the street in which the peasants buy and sell cattle, cordwood, and oats from their sleds, there works Davidov the restorer, burning and scraping back to the pure spirit of the thirteenth century—the epoch of Lord Novgorod the Great.

Davidov, working with his scalpel, was the first man to stare at the face of this great St. Nicholas for nearly eight hundred years.

XXIV

WAR AGAINST GOD

We implore your solicitation. Do not let our last church be closed. They held a meeting, and a resolution was passed by them saying that our cathedral should be closed on April 1, 1929. We devotees were not at the meeting. That is why we beg you to revoke that decision and let us have the cathedral for us devotees whose number exceed 2,000 in the entire *volost* [village district]. Moreover, the great fast has come, and without God and church we cannot exist. I implore you to pay attention to my request. Eternal thanks will be your reward.

Help us!

A DEVOTEE

THIS NOTE WAS THRUST INTO MY HAND AS I STOOD among the weeping peasants outside the Borisoglybsk cathedral in the monastery of that name. Men and women were crying, begging, pleading with us to help them save their last church. It was an agonizing experience.

We could only stand there listening to their pleading. How could one know the truth? I could not count the people in the *volost*; nor had I been present at the

meeting when, as the Communist policemen and members of the local *Ispolkom* assured me, over half the delegates had raised their hands to vote for the closing of the church.

"Our delegates do not represent us," wailed some of the peasants. "Our delegate has been four months in jail," cried others. And dozens of them declared they could have no delegate since they had "lost their voice"—the right to vote—because they were rated as nepmen, kulaks, and former bourgeoisie. It seemed hopeless to try to discover the rights and wrongs of such a case. But here were several hundred men and women weeping because their church was to be closed.

"You don't understand," said the Communists, when I asked them why they were so intolerant. "There is a strong kulak element in this *volost*. They fight every reform. Nor is it true—what they say to you about bread. Lots of them have bread in their houses."

"We have no bread," wailed the peasants. "We have no cloth, nothing to eat or drink, no work, no money, only our church. And now they want to take that!"

There was another church, said the Communists, within a mile and a half. Borisoglybsk, the entire monastery, was to be turned into a museum. When I pointed out that the cathedral which these peasants loved was the least ancient of all the churches inside the rambling yellow monastery walls, so modern in-

deed that the man was still living (in New York) who had painted some of its frescoes, and that the other churches dated from the sixteenth century, the Communists nodded and agreed. Nevertheless, an order was an order; and here it was. The following is an actual copy:

To the Filiation of the Borisoglybsk Museum

To the Rostoff District Executive Committee for pronouncement to all devotees; carbon to the Rostov Museum, also the Central Executive Committee (VZIK).

Extract of the protocol of meeting held by the Presidium of the Yaroslavl Province Executive Committee of the Soviets of October 2, 1928.

Question Discussed

Decided

The breaking of the contract signed with the congregation of the Borisoglybsk monastery, and the closing of the church.

Document of the Rostoff District Executive Committee No. 264.

Comrade Vorontzov's Report.

As it was discovered that the Borisoglybsk religious congregation did not include a number of religious and other kinds of articles in the inventory of the church property; and moreover as two military kitchens have been discovered in the church and cellar; and as the congregation violated the collective contract concerning the exploitation of

Case No. 22.

the church, it has been decided to break the concluded bargain.

One has to take into consideration that at a distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ kilometers there is a church at the Trinity Bor able to hold all the members of the Borisoglybsky congregation, and also that there is a cemetery close to the church, while the monastery at Borisoglybsk is an old building and is partly delivered to the Rostoff Museum, which is expected to spread its activity there. That is why it is considered necessary to have the church of the Borisoglybsk monastery closed, as well as the cemetery liquidated. The church building should be handed over to the museum. We are waiting for the sanction of the All Russian Executive Committee.

The Rostoff District Executive Committee has to notify the religious congregation about the above mentioned decision. This document has been verified by the head of the Office, Brovkin.

OVSIAANNOKOV, Secretary.

This copy is correct.

VAKHTIAROV, Secretary of the District Executive Committee.

There was the document, all filled out and stamped and sealed, as all good Soviet documents are. It was probably as full of inaccuracies as most of the kind. Two military kitchens had been found in the cellar of the church!

Gathered in a great mob inside the medieval tow-

ered gates of the monastery, the peasants watched me as I walked the three quarters of a mile around the wooden-roofed battlements of its high fortress walls. Inside this area were churches painted a bright canary yellow, their clustered domes blue and green against the white clouds of the sky. A trio of priests, swinging incense and chanting, walked through the grove of tall oaks in its park, then on into a clump of pines, where among the forest of leaning crosses, they sang Hallelujahs over a newly made grave.

"It's like an operetta!" laughed a young Communist as we looked down on this scene.

The peasants rushed upon me as soon as I came down from the walls, brushing aside the police, who thereupon ordered me again into the office of the museum, where they once more examined my documents. This was the third time they had done this; they simply wanted to get me away from the inflamed peasants. Finally, with great politeness, they let me go again, and the peasants closed in.

They asked me to come into their church, where, with another crowd of peasants around him, I found a frightened priest. He was afraid to talk to me, and I did not want to talk to him, knowing as I did that it would mean trouble for him. I tried to edge away, but the peasants pulled me further in from the low heated room of the small vestibule in which they were wor-

shipping, leading me into the high vaulted interior of the real church, where golden ikons and painted frescoes covered every inch of the towering walls.

They crowded about me. Old men like gnomes and bent crones dressed in witches' rags made horrid noises weeping with their toothless gums. One woman with cupped lenses over her diseased eyes pressed her earnest face close to mine and begged: "Tell them to leave us our religion—it's all we have!" Another woman, clenching her fists, said her children were not allowed to go to school. A man of about forty shook his head glumly when I said that the parents must teach the children themselves.

"No," he declared in a heavy, throaty voice; "no, our children will have no God." It sounded like a prophecy.

XXV

VILLAGE WORLD

"WELL, THAT FACTORY IS STILL GOING," SAID THE Communist as we picked our way along the mud streets of Barahkti. He pointed to the church. "But just you see how many people are in it."

The church stood behind a wooden fence off the dirty village street. It was an old wooden Ukrainian country church with a gray dome and sharp steeple; and if buildings can have any expression this church of Barahkti looked both alarmed and on the defensive. It was still "going," as the Communist put it; but it was being inspected now by the President of the Village Soviet and several young Communists, all atheists. "Down with religion, drunkenness, smoking, and hooliganism!" was their motto. No wonder the church looked a bit frightened. The village of Barahkti was several miles from a railroad in the heart of a dark, lonely steppe.

I went inside the church. Its interior was painted gray along the lower walls to imitate stone. It was as bright as a toy shop with gaudy ikons and gold-framed Virgins, and with little tapers burning before its gilded

iconostas. All the ikons were draped with peasant cloth embroidered with red stitch-work of peasant pattern showing leaves, crosses, and black crows.

When I first entered the church it was empty except for a few peasants sweeping the floor for the saint's day on the morrow. Then some peasant women came in and stood as if transfixed before the *iconostas*. They were nearly all of them old. Men entered and stood apart, on the right side of the church, beside the priest whose deep resonant chanting seemed to be trying to fill the whole structure—trying to make up for those booming peasant choruses of the past. When I turned to go out I saw that the atheistic President of the Village Soviet had followed me. He was standing by my shoulder, watching.

"The church is no good," he said. "It blinds us to our enemies. The church says that all men should love one another. That is not true—the capitalist is always our enemy." He said he neither drank nor believed in God, because both of them clouded one's brain.

The little village of Barahkti was just a cluster of thatched houses in a ravine of barren steppe. The houses were like those drawn by children; a plain square with one or two windows crookedly stuck in, like the witch house in Hansel and Gretel. But the thatch was a foot thick, cut in steps down the roof like the fin of a fish. Behind the village on the edge of the ravine stood sev-

eral windmills, waving their gaunt arms to grind the grain. The houses were logs plastered smooth with mud. Some were yellow as their original clay, but some were painted white. They had great shafts of wheat bound around them outside, like a Kanaka girdle, to keep them warm during the long winter snow.

Inside the floor was of dirt, wet down and rubbed smooth. The stove was clay, whitewashed and clean. The bread for several weeks is baked in these large ovens, and the family sleeps on top of the stove. The stove being higher than a man's head, steps lead up to the flat sleeping platform. A fire of straw in the oven below—usually ringed around the baking loaves of black bread—keeps the family cot warm. The low white-washed beamed ceiling helps to make the house very cosy. The family goes to bed all in a row, like sardines.

The stove, mud walls, and ceiling are whitewashed three or four times a year. Sometimes the wash is tinted pale blue or cerise. Wooden benches stand along the walls, with wooden bowls and wooden spoons. The hay for fire and cooking is usually piled in one corner. These huts, some of them old and awry, the moss as green as grass on their thatched roofs, together with wooden church, school and coöperative store, are the basis of Ukrainian life.

The school of Barahkti was a fairly modern affair of yellow brick. Here one sees the chasm between the old Russia and the new. Although less than a fourth of the teachers are Communists they are all forced to teach Communism. Every school has its club or communal room, with pictures of Lenin, Stalin, and Rykov; and its own handwritten monthly newspaper, stuck on the wall, most of its comment being jeeringly sacrilegious. The intention underlying all work is to make sound atheistic Communists.

Although such an effort is vital to the Communist programme—to explain Communism and its supposed advantages to the younger generation, so that they will not be so hostile to it as are the old people; and although these local Communist teachers are usually industrious and conscientious, still they seem to be handicapped by the fact that they are Russia's present-day intelligentsia and so are too far removed from the mass of the people. The teachers are in a frantic race toward something they call culture. So are all the intelligentsia. Looking back on the village school-rooms I have been in, I seem to see nothing but a grisly array of anatomical specimens—livers, hearts, spleens, and articulated skeletons, together with Hemholtz resonators, vacuum pumps, and bugs stuck on pins. I saw before me, on the Barahkti village curriculum for

country lads of eight to fourteen, these courses: German, Ukrainian, Russian, Sociology, Nature Study, Botany. This last meant Agriculture. It was really the only useful subject on the list.

"Will all the steppes one day become fields?" began the poem in the school newspaper, "The New Colonist of the Steppes." "No," was the candid second line of this youthful versified opus, "they are not all fields because we are not strong enough to make them so."

The school teacher showed us where during the hard times of the bread shortage they fed the school children three meals a day for a total charge of twelve and a half cents. Lining up his male pupils, he put them through a course of physical jerks. Apathetically raising their hands and turning their palms, they looked ridiculously like a mass of conversationalists on the East Side of New York. This performance, gone through for forty-five minutes once a week, is called *Fizkultura*.

Football, deemed a barbaric game, is prohibited to pupils under sixteen.

The village had an agricultural bank which lent money at six per cent against land, horses, and cattle for seven years. The maximum loan was \$150, averaging between \$25 and \$30. This was enough in most cases to free the poorer peasant from having to borrow money from the richer peasants at pawnbroker rates.

Like all Russian villages, Barahkti was in a civil war of transition: church versus Communist, old versus new. A delight to the tourist, a ghastly puzzle to the Communist, a world in disorder to its own primitive inhabitants.

XXVI

THE OLD MILL

OFTEN AS YOU TRAVEL ACROSS THE FLAT SKYLINE OF Russia you see these wooden windmills waving their crazy arms. Sometimes they have six arms, and that makes them even more crazy. Their village world is so remote from your own that it hardly ever occurs to you that they are actually grinding grain, that there is a dusty miller inside them, and that up in the second story of the windmill, shaking and rumbling as the big vanes sweep round, there is a little cluster of bearded peasants standing in semi-darkness and talking of course about bread.

Their talk was very serious as we climbed up into the grinding room of this wooden windmill on the Rumanian frontier. Instead of thirty poods per hectare ¹ from their land, this year had given them only ten. In the past four months, in some districts, there had been no crop at all. The Government was shipping in seed-cake to feed the cattle, but the horses' ribs were already sticking out. Things were so bad that the actual corn they were now grinding had been bought in Odessa.

¹ A hectare is 2.471 acres, a pood 36 pounds.

It was ominous that a peasant should have to buy corn in Odessa.

Things were so bad in fact that the peasants were not even talking. Nothing could be worse than that. They stood silently, leaning against the shaking walls, watching the hopper. The notched wooden wheel rattled into the cogs of the square steel bar fixed into the stone, the movement of the springboard pressed against it shaking a steady stream of corn kernels into the holé. A sweet warm mass of corn flour poured softly out of the chute. It smelled good, as if it were already being cooked.

Up aloft, under the powdered cobwebs, a booted peasant boy tilted more sacks of rustling corn into the bin. When the wind freshened from the Black Sea the vanes rushed around faster and faster shaking the wooden mill, shooting out the sweet-smelling flour. Then the gale slackened, and we could feel the regular heave as a big wooden vane swept to within a foot of the ground and then swung upward . . . and around.

There was a window in this upper floor of the mill. I could lean out of it and see the big vanes sweep round; see the circle of wooden pegs, the danger line, stuck around us. For one of these huge vanes in full swing could almost cut you in half. I saw the little iron chain and tackle with which the mill is turned to face the wind. And beyond, along the marshes of the Dniester,

I saw the clay houses of the village, each house set in its dirt yard behind a plaited rush fence. The river lay sparkling in the sun. A Rumanian soldier walked along a solid strip of land at the marshy edge, guarding Bessarabia, stolen back from the Russians.

He walked along in his high white sheepskin hat, rifle slung over his back, only 200 yards away, a detested object to the Russians watching him. He was guarding the river, to see that no Bessarabians tried to swim back to Russia. His task would be harder within the next few days, when the river would be frozen and they could walk across. The black winter nights would help them. About two hundred come across at this spot every year. Perhaps the guard was thinking of coming across himself, for many of the annual two hundred were Rumanian soldiers deserting. I had seen the raft which a Rumanian soldier pushed ahead of him eight miles up the river from Akermann. To the outside world Soviet Russia might seem an unenviable refuge, but it was a haven indeed to persecuted ex-Russians escaping from the "Forbidden Land" of Bessarabia.

All of this I saw from the window of that rumbling old wooden windmill. The world outside, I knew, was full of sensational tales about widespread peasant outrages. Here I was in the heart of it, in the southernmost point of the Odessa district, which was suffering



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THE TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY
—(Soviet Poster)

from something that the outside world called a famine. It was not a famine. The peasants around me were not talking about insurrection. They might, in undertones, have been discussing the advisability of murdering the local *selkor* (newspaper correspondent) because the peasants always look upon him, reporting village conditions, as a Government spy. But the very fact of their having no grain of their own rendered the *selkor* almost harmless. A kulak, rich peasant and enemy of the Communists, can no longer be a kulak when he has nothing to secrete; no grain supply hidden for future speculation. The peasants were grumbling about the Government just as American farmers argue against Wall Street. Only, in this case, the Government was always the middleman, taking from one and giving to another, as it thought best for the future of Soviet Russia.

In this very village I had seen the school where children were receiving one good free meal a day. I had seen thin cattle on the edge of starvation; but I had also seen the Government statistics showing 200,000 tons of seedcake and 300,000 tons of straw coming into the affected districts from Siberia.

The peasants, of course, were concerned only about their cattle and themselves. They had no notion of the immensity of the situation: of what it meant, for instance, to ship food across the rutted roads of the

stepped into even their own village, and there were thousands of such villages. Sitting in the top of that wobbling old wooden windmill, looking at the bearded frowning faces of the peasants, not one of them emaciated, I could not help thinking that they were so unutterably stupid that nothing would ever satisfy them.

In a village of German colonists, through which we had passed, their Teutonic enterprise seemed to have made them all kulaks, so that, in the Soviet's equalizing process, almost all of them had been stripped of some wealth, such as cows, land, or horses.

"We can't tell you the terrible things going on here!" they said to us. "Only God can tell you."

We were held up and lugged off to the local Soviet almost as soon as we began to talk to them. A sort of Huck Finn farmer lad, with an army rifle, stood on guard at the door. A harassed Communist, in a black undershirt, came out frowning and scrutinized every inch of our passports. He looked sick, wretched, ill among the burly peasants. As a Communist he may not have believed in Heaven, but I could have imagined his description of Hell. It would have been the village we were in.

XXVII

KULAKS

BECAUSE THE WORD KULAK WILL PROBABLY BECOME more and more familiar to Western ears as the months go on it might be just as well to explain him. A kulak is a rich peasant; rich, that is, in comparison with the other Russian peasants. More than that, to really deserve his title a kulak must exploit other peasants, employ them. Even more, he must be a speculator, a peasant who instead of selling his grain to the Government for seventy cents for thirty-six pounds prefers to sell it to private buyers for \$2.50. The kulaks hate the Communists and the Communists hate the kulaks. It is a lovely hate, they are always trying to down each other.

One of the few mistakes made by the great brain of Lenin related to the kulaks. After the revolution he was asked what should be done with them. "We will leave them to the poorer peasants," he said.

It was a mistake because things turned out the other way round; the poorer peasants were left to the kulaks.

But how can the kulak exist if the Government is against him? That is a question that every one keeps asking in Soviet Russia, including the Communists.

They have taken away his vote, most of his land, horses, and cattle. His sons cannot serve in the Red Army. They cannot go to the village school, unless there is a vacancy after the children of other classes have been placed. The kulak cannot buy food, cloth, or manufactured materials from the village coöperatives at their relatively low prices. He is taxed almost out of existence. And still the kulak exists, in a fashion; though many of them have fled the country under successive waves of persecution.

The shortage of food and manufactured goods gives the kulak his strength because it weakens the village coöperative. When the Government's coöperative store cannot supply him the peasant must buy his food and goods from the private traders in the village bazaar. The private trader usually charges from two to three times as much. Gray bread, for example, in the coöperative is three cents for fourteen and a half ounces. It is seven and a half cents in the bazaar. Same bread. But the coöperatives haven't it. The Government cannot supply because the private trader has been buying the grain from the kulak, paying more than the state. Hence the kulak.

The poorer peasants may all be members of the coöperative, they may all have cards showing that they have sold their grain to the Government and are entitled to buy bread at the low coöperative prices, but

what is the use when the coöperative has no bread to sell?

It is the same with cloth, boots, etc. The goods come in, usually twice a month, to the coöperative stores. The peasant is supposed to be able to buy what he likes. But most of the time there isn't enough to go around. The peasants scramble and fight for what they can get.

The trouble begins in the State Purchasing Department. How large a percentage of its total imports is it willing to allocate to manufactured goods? It carries on through the Soviet factories. In what quantities and at what prices can they manufacture to meet peasant needs? So far the Russian workers have not been able to produce enough goods to supply the peasants, nor at prices to suit their purses. The trouble reaches down to the scramble for goods in the ill-supplied village coöperative, with the private shop meeting the balance of demand, and the kulak walking about among the disgruntled mob encouraging discontent.

The kulak has always been a force in the Russian village. Kulak means fist. In the old days when the peasants had no banks they were accustomed, when they wanted a horse or a cow, to borrow money from the richer peasant, the kulak. He let them have it at exorbitant rates, usually exacting an additional tariff in the shape of so many days of free work. This

function of the kulak still exists. Despite the growing village banks he is still the amiable moneylender, if one can pay the interest. That is why, when a village meeting is called nowadays to vote whether or not the authorities shall confiscate the kulak's store of grain at the State price, the poorer peasants will often vote for the kulak. They are not so sure about the Government's ability, but they know the kulak will loan them money when they are in need.

That is why, declare the Communists, they talk so much about how to solve the kulak. They say he is not important as a productive force and is a social danger. Western critics state that the Russians have severely crippled their agricultural production in their abortive attempts to extinguish the kulak. The Russians say that the kulaks at the most are only five per cent of the total population and produce about ten per cent of the total crops, but that they are a force in the village directly opposed to the very essentials of Communism. They treat him as an enemy of the State and give him the death penalty whenever he murders a village newspaper correspondent. The kulaks killed 172 correspondents last year.

In their attempt to outwit the kulaks the Communists gave them only the worst sections of land in the village community, but the kulaks turned the tables on the Communists by renting themselves and their

horses to the poorer peasants on the good land, who thereby, as employers of labor, became kulaks themselves!

The kulak will last, declare candid Communists, until the final victory of Socialism.

XXVIII

PEASANTS

THERE WAS NO PARTICULAR REASON WHY I SHOULD have chosen to visit the village of Ogodtchi. I had seen several others across frozen Lake Nero. I was drawn to it by the sight of a long line of sleds that had trekked from it to Rostoff across the four miles of lake snows. So I couldn't tell the suspicious police why I preferred Ogodtchi.

"But why?" they protested. "You must have some reason for coming here."

"Of course I wanted to look at it." I stared at them. What reason could be better than that? Then they demanded my documents.

This conversation took place before the dung-dirtied snows outside the little village *traktir*, the peasant tea-room, restaurant, and, to judge by one unstable soul, the local saloon. Ogodtchi is a fishing village of some 600 souls. All of them were heavy at the moment because of the shortage of bread, to say nothing of the fact that they had to pay five times the usual price for it.

Well, the police were polite about my reason for

coming to Ogodtchi. They read my official press-card and walked away, giving me a sour grin.

A foreigner does not need any introduction to the villages of Russia. Just let him drive in and get out of his sleigh. There will be a crowd around him in an instant. He need not flatter himself that it is for his charm of manner that they flock to his side. They want to talk.

"Meat!" cried one peasant when I asked him how he got along. "Why, we have only one chicken for the whole of the village."

This provoked a circle of grins, most of which were lost in the bushy beards or the fat red cheeks of the peasant women. One thing was certain, they were not starving. But that was just the thing they were trying to assure me they were suffering—starvation.

"Your horses are fat," I protested. "You look fat and, as far as I can see, you all look strong and healthy. Now you must be eating something."

"Potatoes," they said contemptuously, and spat.

They also had oats, at one-third the price of wheat; but, to them, oats and potatoes were nothing. It was useless to tell them what the Irish had done on the good old spud, or to sing Scotland's glories bred on oats. Take potatoes away from an Irishman, oats from a Scot, wheat from a Russian, and the fight is on.

That is why you will hear howls about starvation

from the Russian peasants long before any of them really begin to get thin. It is my opinion that, outside of absolute wheat failures, like that which produced the famine of 1921, most of the Russian peasants could live quite well, and feel happy meanwhile, if they could only free themselves from the notion that bread is Life.

But that is a difficult thing to explain to a half-mad mob of angry villagers, all of whom are trying to talk at once. Somewhere in the argument I lost my wife. When I turned around she was no longer there. Some said she had gone into the church, to which I walked, followed by my crowd. I passed the head of the *Ispolkom* and police, who rewarded me with another warning smile. It was all right for me to indicate a regard for churches, because I was a foreigner; but I admired the gray-haired peasant by my side who spat in the direction of the police and led me inside. He bought a candle which he set up for me, but I could not find my wife.

Eventually I discovered a small boy pulling at my coat, who tried by signs and grins to show me that he knew where she was. I followed him down the snowy street, past the little log cabins with their lacy fret-worked wooden window frames, and up through an unpainted log hall into a peasant fisherman's home.

In the center of a crowded circle of peasant men and women I found my wife.

"Be careful where you sit down," she said quickly. "They're all over the place!"

I thought at first she meant the peasants. Then she explained that "they" meant bedbugs, lice, and a parade of cockroaches walking up and down the lace curtains. I saw more wild life in that hut than I had ever met before at one time, which is saying something. I sat down desperately on the wooden wall-bench beside my wife. Courtesy made us drink the tea that the old grandmother made for us. She poured it out into their prize china cups, which she had carefully cleaned with her dress. You must not hurt the feelings of people who offer you their last bits of sugar—and bread!

"We have other czars now," they said darkly, telling us of their woes. Wheat flour was anywhere from \$6 to \$7.50 for 36 pounds; potato flour was \$2. One woman showed us a handful of wheat and chaff which, she declared, cost \$3 for 36 pounds. The coöperative store should have been able to supply them with black bread for three cents a pound. But there hadn't been any bread in the coöperative for days. It was the same as to cloth. A man stood up to display a coat made of rags. "This is the way a peasant dresses," he said.

What was life like in America? Did people have bread there? All they wanted? And white? My God! How much did a laborer make in America? I tried to explain the different scales involved (how false it was to compare them!) and only bewildered myself as much as I did them. I felt hopeless and helpless before their dark minds. Then one of them asked me when would the war start.

“What war?”

He grinned at me slyly, as if I were trying to deceive him. It was all right, he nodded; I knew very well what war he was talking about. What he wanted to know was, when would it start.

I watched the parade of a million bedbugs, lice, and cockroaches. I could have suggested a good war to him right there.

XXIX

YARMOCK! THE FAIR

IT WAS BARELY SEVEN ON A COLD, SNOW-SWEPT, windy morning; and yet already the peasants were lined up for the great Rostoff fair. They were parking their sleds in long lines, like streets, across the snowy field outside the low buildings that fringed the pink kremen walls. Thousands of them.

The sleds were primitive, built with axe and hacksaw; unpainted; the runners made of turned-up logs, steel shod; with wicker baskets on top. The sleds were ancient, their design dating to a time long before Peter the Great; but they were still used for the same purposes, and their ingenuity was miraculous.

By removing the wicker basket and putting on a flat platform of boards they were turned into hay sleds, on which half a ton of sweet-smelling fodder could be piled. By using the wicker basket they could accommodate a square meter of birch cordwood. On the way home, with the back-rest stepped in, the peasant and his wife could turn their sled into a traveling bed, on which they could lie in the hay, a red comforter over their fur-clad forms, dozing as the patient horse

trudged back the twenty or thirty miles to their lonely village.

Peasants were mulling about among their sleds now. They were offering a square meter of sweet birch cordwood for \$3.50, and many of them had come twenty-five miles through the night to sell the load. Others, with their sleds almost lost under scented piles of hay, were offering this at sixty cents a *pood*. They were clustered in knots, talking steadily. Except for their headgear it would have been impossible to tell the men and women apart. All were huge, clumsy figures, wrapped in rough-tanned sheepskin coats, their feet heavy in clumping woolen boots. The men wore fur caps, the women were heavily hooded in gray shawls. They were as rough and muddy-looking as their furry horses, before each of which was an impressive pile of hay.

The peasants were sad this morning because bread, their king and staff of life, was selling for thirteen rubles a *pood*—five times its usual price. But even under that black cloud their native shrewdness and satire was ever at their hand.

"*Pojolst!*" cried one, when he spotted my camera, prancing around in his utter rags. "Please! Take a photograph of the cultured peasant."

His companions rocked with heavy laughter, delighted with his jibes at "culture," the password of the

proletariat, although one or two of the women did whimper a little as they began lamenting to me about bread.

I have followed many fairs—in Donegal, in the Balkans, in Spain. With their hurdygurdies and toy theaters, they always seem to me a glamorous moment of peasant life; a version of the town and its delights laid out for their special benefit. Booths instead of shops; sideshows in lieu of theaters; and the liquor merchant always at hand. A few hours or days of spending and companionship, of gossip and drink, and then back to the land again.

Although the temperature was about fifteen below zero, this Russian fair ran to type. Later on in the day, about eight o'clock, the wooden booths threw open their flaps and displayed fantastic counters of china-ware, painted toys, tins of fruit, cakes, candies, harness, hardware, lamps, paintings, pottery, clothes, silk scarfs—all waiting for the peasant's money. There were games of chance, raffles of everything from a samovar to a box of biscuits; booths where the fat proprietors made crisp waffles on an oil-stove before your hungry eyes and rolled them around a luscious stuffing of whipped cream. There was another game where you snapped a ball around a board set with nails and pockets, and if it dropped into the right one you got a ruble, though it never seemed to drop right.

There were electric machines the brass handles of which you grasped, and you jumped and squealed when they turned the crank.

There was a merry-go-round! Fifteen below zero, noses freezing, its orchestra playing furiously as a man swung the wooden horses around and around by hand. One man played the drums and cymbals, two others dragged the cavalry march of the Red Army from wailing accordions. And—wonder of all wonders—a Ferris wheel! It was forty feet high, a rotating circumference of green boxes, swinging up and around, two peasants in each box, some of them howling their delight but most of them looking anxiously at the two boys who were swinging them shivering upward to the sky.

There were two theaters—tents walled in with boards, like Alaskan saloons, with gorgeous painted signs across their tops. Inside were dancing men in funny hats, and clowns, and furiously antic men in spangled tights who spun barrels with their feet and balanced chairs on their chins, and jumped over backwards.

“Hi! Hello, Ivan Simeonivitch! Have a drink.”

Vodka bottles began to appear on the glassy snow of the fair grounds. The peasant mass began to stagger a bit. They drove wildly, recklessly, through the crowded streets of the town, knotted themselves in bunches



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THE FOOTPRINTS OF REACTION

—(Soviet Poster)

beneath the pink walls of the kremlin, struck hands in drunken bargains under the blue, golden-starred domes. Some of the women were sobbing because their men were drunk. Others mixed their harsh high laughter with the rest of the clatter made up of yells, the sounds of rushing sled-runners, the mangled music from the accordions.

And through it all they crowded into the low steaming rooms of the Red Hotel *stolovia*. They ate sliced salt-herring garnished with cold onions, beets, and cabbage. They pulled their own bread from their blouses. They ate sausage cut up into chunks from the family plate, each taking a turn to spear a piece, putting down the fork between times to show they were not greedy. Bearded faces like those of the apostles, shawl-hooded madonnas! What a vast, untouched, unwieldy wealth they represent in the storehouse of mankind!

XXX

PROLETARIANIZING THE PEASANT

UNTIL RECENTLY THE THEORY WAS HELD AND EVEN rigorously fought for by the Right Wing within the Communist Party that it was necessary for the salvation of Soviet Russia to allow the peasant more chance for individual growth in the development of his land. This theory is still held by many of the most prominent Bolsheviks, but only in secret now. The amazing growth of the Soviet kolhose (collective farms) seems to have brought a new force to bear on the peasant problem. Instead of developing as an individual the peasant becomes insignificant as a member of a rapidly expanding kolhose. His control over his own parcel of land and agricultural inventory becomes less and less until it is practically nil; and if the collectivist programme is fully carried out the peasant will end as a hired hand of the State, a member of the land proletariat. That is what Dictator Stalin wants.

It is surprising that the peasants could have been induced to embark on any such scheme. The psychological resistance of the peasant has been the hardest problem faced by the Bolsheviks. The peasants were

petty bourgeoisie with a deeply-rooted belief in private property. The kulaks (richer peasants) would fight the Soviet power, it was believed, until they either destroyed it or were destroyed. For eleven years the Russian press has been gory with kulak outrages—murders, arson, cattle-maiming, executions. Some 15,000 German colonists tried to leave Russia. These things go on yet, but in many places where kolhoses have been formed even the kulaks have become members. What worked this miracle? Force is the answer.

The collective farms were first started on the confiscated large estates of former landowners. In many instances farming had already been carried out there on the grand scale. These were worked by proletarian and hired farm-hands. During the period of militant Communism a few collectives were formed as artels and communes. But these produced virtually nothing for the market. The New Economic Policy from 1921 to 1927 began to change this growth radically. "Companies" were started; that is, small groups of peasants clubbed together to buy and work agricultural machinery, ultimately pooling their lands. They began to produce for the market. The collectives, which up to now had been almost all started by the poorest peasantry, received recruits from the main mass of the middle peasants. From 1921 to 1927, 20,000 collectives were organized, over half of which were "companies."

The year 1927 opened a new period. At this date, according to the Russian statisticians, acreage under cultivation and cattle had reached pre-war levels. Home industry began to produce some agricultural machinery. In 1929 the collectives numbered 60,000. They averaged ninety hectares (225 acres) each. There were more than 200 collectives of over 5,000 acres each. And this last figure does not include the rich Ukraine, where in 1929 there were 3,000,000 acres in collectives, over 500,000 of which were in large farms. The figures for June, 1929, showed 900,000 peasant families enrolled in collectives, consisting of over 4,000,000 people. They were cultivating 11,000,000 acres.

The collective movement was closely allied with the coöperatives, out of which the kolhose was a logical growth. The village coöperative, first used for supply, began in 1927 to be used for organizing production. The coöperatives were the social and economic force which achieved this.

Collectivism grew out of coöperation. For example, a coöperative credit society makes a contract with a group of peasants, sometimes a whole village, according to the terms of which the peasants are obliged to sow a certain area of land, carry out a land survey (redistribution for common holding), use the best grade of seeds, and introduce the manifold field system of

rotation crops. In return for doing this the credit society agrees to supply the peasants with agricultural machinery and high-grade seeds, pay the cost of land survey, and furnish an agronom (agricultural expert). Therefore, as a result of this contract, a kolhose or collective farm is formed, and the collective agrees to sell grain to the coöperative at a fixed price.

These collectives further combine to form "bundles" in order to make themselves pay, whereupon the peasant's individual control over his own land becomes still more remote and feeble. In the small kolhose he still has some say about it, because he sits in on the election of the president and board of five members, who are elected by the local peasant assemblage. His voice is heard in the collective meetings when they decide what wages or drawing account they are going to allow themselves. But when the kolhoses begin to combine into "bundles," and village after village is merged, he must vote for men whom he very likely has neither seen nor heard of, who may or may not be peasants. As the kolhoses increase in size they are more and more controlled by experts, people sent out from Moscow, envoys of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Perhaps the chief reason for the apparently widespread weakening of peasant "psychological resistance" is sheer desperation. The whole Soviet policy seems to have been intended to pulverize the village

mass, to break up the "hard lumps" of kulaks, to prevent the middle-class peasant from getting richer and thus to make them amenable to collectivization. The income tax, introduced several years ago, was an admirably constructed instrument to achieve this effect. When a peasant accumulated more than one horse, a cow, perhaps a mill, he was penalized. The direct result was that he let go most of his livestock, keeping barely enough to cultivate his land, often not even enough for that. Peasants have led me to their stables to show their one horse. A bumper crop might be out in the field, but the peasant and his family could not harvest it. "They just don't want us to get rich"; that was his desperate complaint.

Moreover, the peasant was assessed a certain stipulated amount of grain which he must deliver to the State at the State's fixed price. In many cases the assessment was for even more grain than he had, whereupon he was accused of hoarding and was sold out. The result was that, with not enough livestock to cultivate his land, and with the threat always hanging over him that he had to supply a certain fixed amount of grain to the State at the end of the year, even the most individualistic of the old peasants began looking for a way out in the extended credits, agriculture machinery, and the safety assurance held out by the State in the form of a local collective farm.

If he did not yield to State pressure the poorer peasants by forming a local collective around him would soon squeeze him into it. If he did not go in he would be isolated and cut off from purchasing his supplies at the local coöperative. His land—if it stood in the way of the collective—would be taken away from him (he supposedly being given an equal area of land somewhere else), and he would make himself a conspicuous target for all the “administrative” measures aimed at unhappy peasants who set themselves against the government. One sees even kulaks trying to get into the local collectives. I have seen a letter telling of a kulak who begged the local collective to admit him, taking over his mill, horses, land, everything.

The poor peasants play a great rôle in the formation of these collectives. Forming as they do the overwhelming majority in any village, themselves destitute and desperate, they are usually eager to accept any form of Government help and credit that promises to put them on their feet. In one tractor-squadron district which I visited, where 251 farms had been formed into a collective, there were 180 poor peasant families, 50 middle peasants, 14 rich peasants, and 4 kulaks. The filling station and storehouse for the squadron was in the confiscated home of another kulak. He had previously owned ten hectares of land, out of which he had only cultivated eight, thus falling foul of the law

demanding a proper working of one's entire holding. He had been dispossessed. When I asked if he had been recompensed for the loss of his buildings, and given another ten hectares somewhere else that did not interfere with the collective, some of the peasants said "yes," and others said "no." They also said that they were going to kick out the four kulaks they then had in the collective.

So far in the fight between the Soviet dictatorship and the kulaks, the odds seem to be heavily against the kulaks and in favor of the further proletarianization of the peasants.

XXXI

A COLLECTIVE FARM

THE KRIUSHANSKY KOLHOSE OR COLLECTIVE FARM lies on the edge of that incredible Russian steppe that stretches for a thousand miles from the river Don into Turkestan. It covers 3,400 hectares and is made up of 250 farms and 1,070 peasants. As a village of individuals it sowed five hundred hectares; as a collective it now sows 1,750 hectares. As individuals the peasants gave the grain elevator about ten per cent of their crop; as a collective they give seventy-five per cent. The Kriushansky collective farm has sixteen tractors supplied by the "Bread-Center" at Moscow on credit, also four separate threshing machine stations of five machines each. The collective was started in August, 1928.

This is a "tovarishy" kolhose, or company, where the peasants still own their individual homes, poultry, and perhaps a milk cow and pig each; but all of their agricultural inventory, including working cattle as well as the land, is held in common. Each member of the collective shares in the profits according to the number of days he works in a year. The total net in-

come is divided by the number of working days; this establishes the daily rate to be paid to individuals. There are six categories of work paid for in a graduated scale of rates, and an individual is paid according to the number of days he has worked in each category. Sometimes he may have worked in all six. As far as possible the women are expected to share equally in all profits with the men. When a boy or girl reaches the age of eighteen he or she also is entitled to an adult's share. During the year's work, before actual profit or loss is ascertained, the individual is paid by the collective a daily wage of from 70 to 75 kopecks, mostly in kind.

A plan of work is made for the whole year by the agronom, the agricultural expert. According to the plan, the village is divided into groups under group leaders, and the work is apportioned among the groups. Leaders of the groups are in daily touch with the Board, consisting of five members elected by a village meeting. The kulak (rich peasant or one paying the "individual" or income tax) has no "voice," no vote in these village meetings. In this village there were two kulaks, but they had given their entire inventory to the collective. One gave, among other things, two horses, some agricultural machinery, and his grain mill. Here is his letter, asking to be admitted into the overpowering kolhose:

"I herewith ask the BOARD of the kolhose to admit into its capital all my belongings; one mill, two horses, etc., etc."

He gave these without payment.

To look at, Kriushansky was just another one of those remote, lost-to-the-world Russian villages, sprawled along some willows that grew like hair in the rut of a slow stream crawling across the barren, burning, desolate steppe. The steppe knows no fences. The golden wheat, blazing under the hot sun, stretched off to the unbroken skyline.

In places where a collective had not been formed and the peasants still cultivated their land on their little individual holdings the wheat sheaves were still piled in small ricks, waiting to be taken in to their separate villages and threshed by hand and flail. On the collective land the sheaves were going across the steppes in great caravans of carts toward the monumental ricks beside the American threshing machines. It was spewing out their golden chaff, served by scores of laughing peasant girls, men, and women. They worked, ate, and slept under the great blue bowl of Russian sky.

We drove out—the agronomes, the Collective Commissar, two Germans, and I—from the little provincial town of Balishoff in American motorcars. We drove

along deep dusty roads through drowsy villages, across a sunbaked steppe, where the hot air whirled dust spirals like towering water-spouts across the cracked earth. Then came a sudden amazing and soothing greenness—willows and rushes beside slow-moving water—and Russian women, naked as Eve, washing their babies and clothes in the stream.

We found tragedy on the way—a village of desperate “individual” peasants. One of them, cultivating a farm of three and a half hectares, told the Germans and myself that the year before he had harvested eighty poods of grain, out of which the Government had made him give up sixty at the State price of 1.30 rubles per pood. Out of the surplus left him he could not buy even one pair of boots at 30 rubles. It took 40 poods of rye to buy a pair of boots—that was the way he phrased it to us. The year before he had paid a tax of seven rubles; this year he would have to pay ten, and subscribe another twenty to the “Industrialization Loan.” He had only one horse, and it was too tired to collect this year’s harvest—a bumper crop. The horse (and it was a good one) had collapsed.

Other peasants in the same village had had the same experience. They all complained that they were not able to go on under the existing conditions—lack of fodder, excessive taxation. One of them said: “We are not allowed to have cattle. To tell the truth, they

simply don't want us to get rich. If we have a family of five people, one horse, one cow, one calf, they tax us ten rubles. Add another horse, twenty rubles. If we have three horses they tax us from forty to fifty." One old man said that the year before he had been able to work his parcel of land in one day because of the good condition of his cattle. This year, with insufficient feed and weak cattle, he had needed five days to cultivate the same area. The year before he had had sufficient seed for his land. "This year I have much less and I don't know how much I shall be able to sow; because if you have seeds everybody knows it, and the Government forces us to give it to them."

Further on we came to a mill grinding wheat, run by an oil engine. Seven peasants had formed an artel, to operate it, an artel being a workers' voluntary co-operative society. Each year the government had tried to charge "individual" tax on the members of this artel. So far they had successfully avoided it; this year they would have to pay. They were giving away their lands in order to escape such financial punishment.

They told us the story of the man who had previously run the mill. He had had nothing but that and his house. But he had received four pounds out of every pood (36 pounds) of grain he ground for the local peasants. Out of that the government had demanded that he sell at the fixed rate "at least half as much

grain as the whole village could supply." He could not do it; the State sold him out. "And now he runs around like a madman," the peasants said. Yes, of course they would join a collective—it was the only way out.

Such was the prelude to the crowded collective committee-room in the dispossessed kulak's house at Kriushansky—despair and desperation. But in the collective rooms there was hope, a bit too optimistic perhaps but an onward and upward thrust. We were aware that in the background lurked some pessimists who would have liked to come out openly and criticize. But they were afraid to do that before the important collective directors from Moscow. We were sure we should find countless examples of poor organization and management on their common farm, such as the mishandling of overmanned tractors and harvesters, but then they had to learn how to use such things. The threshing machine mismanaged is a more hopeful sight than peasants using back-breaking flails. The faces of the peasants were eager.

As I looked at them I thought of an old, old peasant, the village fool perhaps, whom we had talked with on the road. Asked why he did not want to enter a collective, he replied in the language of Red Russia: "I prefer to remain autonomous."

XXXII

THE RED LIGHTHOUSE

IN THOSE CIVIL AND SANGUINARY WARS THAT ravaged Russia after the October revolution, a group of hard-riding Cossacks attached themselves to the Red General Budenny, and helped to drive out the armies of the Poles and Denekin. Then, their vocation as professional killers abolished by the Soviets, these old janissaries of Czarist days looked about for a New Life.

They found it on the barren steppes they had ranged so freely as children. Grouped about the personality of one of their sergeants, a thinker as well as a fighter, they set up a communal farm. They got a credit from the Government and started a herd of cattle, which went down with hoof-and-mouth disease and promptly died. Some of the Cossacks drifted off after that and settled down as individual farmers, but fifty-seven of them—the Reddest of the outfit—went off with the sergeant and started all over again. They obtained from the Soviet a grant of land that had not been worked for over ninety years—bare, desolate, sunbaked steppe on the flanks of a muddy little river. They lived in tents at first; then built a log-and-mud cabin. They

hoisted a flag and called the cabin the "Red Light-house."

There it stands to-day, looking out on the unbroken sea-like horizon of the vast steppe. It has other buildings around it now—a white-washed communal dining-room, stables, cattle-pens, tractor sheds. I sat in the communal dining-room and ate cherry jam from their orchard. I swam with them in their lazy little stream—boys, girls, and women. Gloriously free in their loneliness of the steppe, they had long ago given up the convention of bathing suits. One of them, as we dried ourselves in the sun, told me that another Cos-sack commune had been started next to them. It was called "Paradise."

I wondered. Anything less idyllic than those wood-and-mud buildings baking and fly-buzzing under a pitiless sun, would be hard to imagine. Treeless, no shade. I ate the jam, but I never did see the cherry orchard. It was probably down in some lush land along the river. The clothes the swimmers were putting on were patched and tattered. The lips of the girls were taut, and their eyes had a grim look in them. Yet they grinned sheepishly when I asked them if they liked their New Life. Bending their heads, they said: "Of course we do."

One of the men, the former sergeant, stated: "It may be wrong to say it, but it makes us feel happy



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ONE OF THE TWELVE GREAT CHURCH FESTIVALS

Jesus: "My congratulations, Mamma, on your annunciation."

—(Soviet Poster)

when we all sit down together in our dining-room. You see, we were all very poor."

That was the genesis of this commune—a collective battle against poverty. A commune is quite different from those other two collectives—the "tovarishly" company and the artel. In them the peasants pool land which they already own and work it in common, but retain for their individual selves some of their dairy animals, poultry, and of course their homes. In a commune everything is held in common. Usually it starts with a combination of landless people, poor people. Therefore, with tractors working over their growing acres, fat cattle in the communal farmyard, a cheery dining-room where they could all chat and hold meetings together, and the communal swimming hole, it was no wonder those other poor peasants had called their place "Paradise."

There were two hundred members of the "Red Lighthouse" then, and they expected to take in another two hundred in 1930. The first communal attempt, which had failed through the death of the herd, was in debt to the Government for the 20,000 rubles loaned them to purchase their animals. The second commune, the "Red Lighthouse," had taken this debt on and was paying it off. The members reckoned themselves to be worth in cultivated land and agricultural inventory over 200,000 rubles.

They cultivate 700 hectares of steppe. The year before our visit they had sold 12,000 poods of grain to the elevators, keeping 5,000 for themselves for food and seed. The "Red Lighthouse" produces almost all that it eats. Sugar, coffee, tea, and salt are virtually the only outside purchases. The commune eats meat but once a day. The children eat four meals daily and may have all the milk they can drink. The members eat together, but married couples have rooms to themselves. The children, except the youngest who stay with their parents, sleep in a communal children's dormitory. From the age of fourteen to sixteen they work as semi-adult members of the commune. After that they become full members. Eighteen is the legal age for marriage in the Soviet Union, and there had been four marriages during the previous year, four babies born, and two legal abortions.

These communes, of course, have to make their own rules of life. The splendid isolation of the steppe gives them an excellent opportunity to do this. Some of the wildest theories of Communism are put into practice almost at once. The "Red Lighthouse," for example, believing that everything they had belonged to each and all of them, made it the rule that any member could go to the communal storehouse and take out shoes, food, and cloth according to his or her actual needs. But this apparently did not work well. A new

rule is that each person is entitled to draw one ruble a day against his share in the yearly division of profits. With that he can pay for what he needs at the store. Each member is supposed to work a ten-hour day and women are supposed to share equally in the profits with the men. Special workers, such as tractorists, mechanics, and the agricultural expert, are paid special rates. Experience has shown that a first-class tractor driver, for example, deserves and should be paid more than an ordinary farm-hand.

As a collective commune the "Red Lighthouse" is allowed to hire farm laborers during the peak of the harvest season, a practice that would label an individual peasant as a kulak, an exploiter of labor, and put him outside the pale. The commune shows that it does not believe in equality of labor or earning power. It divides such hired help into four categories with four rates of payment. Some will claim that this proves that the Communism of the "Red Lighthouse" is failing. I think not. The effort is communal, and the product is shared as fairly as these people think possible. They vote the rates themselves, the unskilled, lower-paid members being in the majority. The difference between the lowest and highest rates is not enough to justify even a suspicion that any member is exploiting the others.

It was among these hired hands that I saw what such

a commune could do for the really poor. Two of them had been members of Russia's army of savage homeless children. They had turned up at a previous harvest, worked, and were now members of the commune. Another was a youth who had just arrived, after walking sixty-five versts from his home, where, he said, there was no work. He was earning 1.38 rubles as a hired laborer. I asked him if he intended to settle down there as a member of the commune. He said he did not know.

"He can if he wants to," said the former sergeant. "We need lots of strong people. Last year we sold the elevator 12,000 poods and kept 5,000 for ourselves; this year we will sell 40,000 and keep 8,000 for ourselves. Yes, we need more and more people to help us conquer the steppe."

XXXIII

COSSACK SCHOOLMISTRESS

SHE ACHIEVED THE INCREDIBLE FEAT OF USING three hours to boil our eggs four minutes—but then she served them with her own hands. She gave us cocoa and eggs for dinner and Irish stew and tea for breakfast. By that time we did not care. She was a Cossack girl, and a pretty one, slender as Niobe, blue-eyed, the school-teacher of the Budenny collective farm.

Now the 7,000 hectares of the Budenny lie on sun-blazing steppe so flat and yellow that I was not at all surprised to see a camel swinging across them. It might have been the desert. Only the mountainous straw-ricks at our backs and the sharp stubble before my feet spoke of the season when all this had been a sea of green wheat, and of tractors that followed the same furrows for miles and miles. Out on the steppe lay other villages, lost almost in the ravines of their slow-moving streams. This was the country of the famous Don Cossacks.

The pretty school-teacher was the sequel to hours, yes, days of motoring across the dry dusty steppe. When we arrived at Budenny we came in three cars.

The occupants of the first one still looked to be white, those in the second car resembled Eurasians, and those in the third full-blooded Ethiopians. We went to the commune power-house (which had an artificial pond of water beside it on the steppe), and there we stripped and had a miraculous shower bath from the hot water of its boilers. Then we were escorted to the school-house, where, it was presumed, we should eat and sleep. And there, dressed in an obviously home-made but pretty blue frock, stood the lovely creature with her unafraid Cossack eyes. She was in the biggest room of her little school for children from four to eight. Beside her were the pegs on which hung their tiny bathing shorts, in which she would parade them all day; and over each peg was its owner's mark. There were paintings of animals—frog, lion, pig, duck, tiger, elephant. Lining the wall were little chairs that came up to our knees. And there stood the school-teacher, the social hostess for the village, dressed in her best and only satin slippers.

I write about her because she was the spirit of all that was beautiful and eager in this life of the new colonists of the steppe. Even the statisticians forgot their paper lives for the moment to try and win her regard.

I had suffered a lot from those statisticians. At 2 A. M. the previous night, when I was trying to sleep on my folded arms across a railway restaurant table,

a comrade had turned up with a portfolio under his arm and graphs and sheets of statistics over a yard long. From two until three I had been forced to listen politely while he expounded to me how he had made a successful "bundle" of thirteen previously unsuccessful collective farms. They had not been, he said, economically efficient enough to stand by themselves. And then as the dawn broke I had asked him one question: "Tell me, how many of the farms were operating at a profit and how many at a loss?"

That, he said, was the one set of figures he did not have. Whereupon I made a few remarks that earned me the reputation of being not only a materialistic but very rude American bourgeois. So you can see why I smiled when she turned the statisticians down, even the flute player.

And here I must make a digression to speak of this delightful Russian and his flute. He was a photographer from the newspaper "The Young Communist Truth." He wore a white linen suit that was built on the pajama pattern. His flute was of bamboo made by himself. He was a genius. He played for us as we lay down to slumber in apple orchards with the ripe fruit dropping on our heads, as we sat under the bright stars on the tops of mountainous collective haystacks, as we dried ourselves in the moonlight after bathing in the dark sulky steppe streams. And just before we reached

the edge of the wide Budenny he played for the baby of the wife of the druggist of a little sleepy town while that lady went off in search of her husband to open his little shop. He played like Pan.

But still the pretty schoolmistress turned him down, because, you see, she had those eggs to cook.

There is something touching in the spectacle of kindly simple people putting their best foot forward to receive visitors they conceive to be sophisticated and distinguished foreigners in their midst, especially when the aforesaid simple people are pretty girls. The poise of the school-teacher was perfect. She did not apologize for just giving us eggs. She merely put them before us with a smile, her slender arms reaching over our shoulders. To cover our dismay—for during that three-hour wait we had been expecting at least a banquet—the flute player jazzed Chopin's "Funeral March."

But we had our revenge, for when the statisticians got going again, encouraged by semi-starvation to incredible intricacies of tabulated figures and fancy, she was by politeness forced to sit there and listen, wide-eyed, her pretty chin sunk thoughtfully in her cupped hands.

When it came to sleep, the two Germans and I, who had not slept under cover for something like eight days, looked about for our usual bunk—a communal hayrick. But the only one we found was too round to

climb, so we each took two of the children's tiny canvas cots that the schoolteacher offered us. We took them outside, and we placed them so that the hayrick stood between us and the moon, hoping that there were no camels about to nibble our hair. The teacher's light burned for a few minutes in her room, then the vast steppe was quiet.

I was lying there, thinking of her life, bringing up these new and sturdy little colonists of the steppe; of how she had chivvied into a corner a covey of them who had come in to stare at us. Then they had stared at us from behind her skirts. At that moment, without thinking, I put my elbow on one of the infant cots and tried to turn. There was a rip of agonized canvas, a splintering of sticks, and I lay among the wreckage on the ground. Both of the Germans crashed their cots at almost the same time. We had destroyed the entire sleeping outfit of the Cossack kindergarten.

That explains the bewildered and accusing stare in the statisticians' bespectacled eyes when, halfway back to Moscow, the Germans and I handed them a little envelope, on which was written: "For the school of the Budenny collective farm."

XXXIV

BATTERED OLD YAROSLAVL

YAROSLAVL, LIKE KAZAN AND NIZHNI-NOVGOROD, is another of those glorious golden-crowned Volga cities whose names are set with swords in the walls of Russian history. Founded in 1042 by Yasoslav the Wise, sacked by the Tartars in 1238, rising to its full glory in the seventeenth century, its latest escapade was to figure as the center of what was probably the fiercest fighting of the Russian civil war. For sixteen days in 1918 a last remnant of desperate White officers armed with English machine guns shot it out with hordes of Red revolutionaries armed with artillery. They destroyed over two thousand houses and five thousand men. There is hardly a wall in all Yaroslav not ploughed by their bullets. They left what is unquestionably the most romantic skyline in all the Soviet Union.

This skyline is the battered church domes of old Yaroslav. And what churches! Churches of enamel and mosaic, with bulbous domes of gold, barbaric pyramids—no two alike—all roaring with color. Clusters of golden crosses. Deep-sounding bulging domes sitting flat on high arches, with little sharp domes on tall

towers rising like chimes all around them. The famous outrageous churches of the Yaroslav school, built to the glory of God and the Czars, based on the slavery of the peasants, gaudy with ornamentation. Frescoes adorn every inch, except the iron floor, of their ornate and bewildering interiors. The walls are heavy with gold and silver-crowned ikons. These flaunting structures were reared when the Church was a mouthpiece of officialdom, an instrument of police and oppression; and when the gentlemen organized slave-hunts for their escaped peasantry.

The brazen churches of the Yaroslav school, there is something tremendous in the thought that these old Czarist officers, the end of their line, should have made their last and most bitter fight in these insolent creations which their line had reared, and which had upheld their kind. In the end, they fell away from their machine-guns, dropped from the crazy cupolas, hurtled past the painted walls, crashed on the iron floors before the upraised hands of Peter and Paul and Elijah—even as the dead crow I found on the snow-drifted floor of Nicholas the Wet.

A heavy shell of some caliber had knocked off the massive fish-scaled cupola of Nicholas the Wet. I climbed into the church through dark corridors, still filled with sand-bags. I crawled among them and under them, and at last stood inside the painted walls, lighted

now by the rents up aloft; and there, wherever I stared, I saw fantastic life-size scenes from the Bible. The Holy Ghost, as a wooden dove, lay on its back beside the dead crow!

In the Church of Peter and Paul on the Volga I climbed through an entanglement of shattered iron and came on a floor piled with bird droppings, guano a foot deep like that on the islands off Peru. I found ikons stacked up like cordwood. The gray-hooded crows stared down insolently from the twisted iron-work of a shattered cupola overhead.

In the Church of the Nativity, which I found on fire when I got there, I waded through the smoke and found in the old archives Bibles from 1682, the time of Peter and Ivan, their two names side by side in the mouldy worm-eaten books. A soft silt of snow was ceaselessly falling down on them. In a chapel I found a disordered pile of priests' vestments—surplices, tattered silk, gold-bedecked robes, heavy with crosses. In one church, where the guns of the Reds had conveniently shot all the cupolas away, I found a club.

In the Monastery of Our Savior, dating from the twelfth century, within whose fort-like long walls the Whites put up their best fight, I found the Church of the Transfiguration entirely transfigured. Half of it had been shot away. And inside what was left I found a carpenter's shop, the iron floors knee-deep in wood

shavings, and peasant workmen sawing and planing away under Soviet slogans pasted across the frescoes of Rykov and Tomsy. A blacksmith had a forge going beside a painted Sea of Galilee.

And here I saw a little change, perhaps only temporary, in the flood of destruction. Peasant workmen, under the direction of the Commissariat of Education, were rebuilding these battered churches. Inside the Monastery of Our Savior was a workshop where architects were supervising the restoration. Using old materials as much as possible they were replacing stone on stone to the original likeness. I saw earnest architects over their photos and blue-prints, and skilled masters carefully restoring the old ikons. They had already rebuilt the fantastic tower of old Nicholas the Wet, who, by the way, might be the patron saint of many Americans. They had put back most of the cupolas of the battered Peter and Paul. And they kept under locked guard the precious Church of Elijah the Prophet.

This dove-colored structure, so plain externally and so outrageously ornate once you get in it, was saved from much destruction by reason of its position in the very heart of Yaroslavl. The ever-present crows eyed me from the pine trees as I entered its glass and iron gates. They were the note of its desolate exterior. Inside I stood amidst a blaze of colors—vivid blues and yellows and reds. Every inch of its tall walls and two

massive pillars was painted with life-size scenes from the life of Elijah. All painted in costumes and the castellated scenery of the seventeenth century! A wedding party sat at the table in the actual Russian ritual, with Russian cakes before them. Terrific scenes of wheat fields, and journeys, and battles—they dazzled me. The very walls seemed to flame with the crude colors of the stiff figures. A horrible example, perhaps, of the vulgar taste of Czar Alexis' *boyars*, whose artists used the contemporary art of all Europe as a fish-pond for their fancies; but nevertheless the most perfect example existent of the seventeenth century Yaroslavl school.

And so, at sundown, I walked out on the middle of the frozen river and looked back. The Volga ice was a half-mile wide at this point. And as I looked back to the high cliffs all I could see of Yaroslavl was the seventeenth century port—the same skyline that met the eyes of Peter the Great.

I stared at it until the sun set, leaving it just a jagged silhouette, along whose tipless towers and toppling domes I could see where the twentieth century had shot away most of the seventeenth.

XXXV

NIZHNI-NOVGOROD

THE CHURCH DOMES OF NIZHNI-NOVGOROD STILL shine beside the Volga like golden helmets in the sun, but the face under them has changed.

Nizhni began changing its face during the World War when the old regime, fleeing from the Germans, transported its factories and its artisans from Warsaw, Reval, and Riga; and set them down here, some 300 miles east of Moscow, far from the Occident, where the Oka joins the Volga, and two railways meet. They would be safe here, so it seemed, in the heart of old Czarist Russia. Then came the Revolution. And Nizhni, changing face, set in to become a center of Continental industry, instead of living for its great fair.

The great Nizhni fair was probably the most colorful commercial center in the world. It had 8,000 booths. Merchants flocked to it from all Russia, Asia, and the Far East. It sold everything. Things were not sold from samples, the merchants brought their goods with them. Millions of rubles in rugs, jade, and silk, stored in the big red warehouses by the river, had

started on the backs of camels back in China. For two months every year, from July 28 to September 23, that low triangle of land between the Volga and the Oka almost sank under the wealth of its goods.

But the World War interrupted the great fair, which had been going on for a hundred years. The aftermath of the Russian civil war wrecked most of it (many a new house in Nizhni to-day was built with the red bricks from these famous old booths) and the edicts of the Soviet against private trading have killed it. The Bolsheviki have no use for such old-fashioned affairs. The fair's gaunt frame still holds some life, a few merchants still collect there; but the Persians no longer bring their fine rugs (not for the proletariat), they bring raisins instead. The great fair is dead.

Sitting in the wooded park inside Nizhni's crumbling kremlin walls, with the fair gone, you feel as if a lifeless city lay behind you. A new one, you know, is taking its place. But that hasn't arrived yet, and it will be a long, long time before Nizhni will achieve any industrial magnitude, any liveliness that will compensate, if it ever can, for the color and romance of its lost fair. At the present moment its streets are drab and dreary. Its shops, Communist and otherwise, are catering to a taste which is not very particular, which even rejoices in most things that it finds because they are



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HOW GOD TOOK ENOCH ALIVE INTO HEAVEN

—(Soviet Poster)

distinctly better than it was accustomed to. Its cafes are run for people who do not mind dirty cutlery and soup stains on the walls. Its hotels are little better than barns. Its bookstores—and there you find the great exception—its bookstores are excellent. Better than they have ever been, for the proletariat is more hungry for knowledge than it is for cakes, or even bread.

Sit on one of the old wooden benches in the kremlin park and gaze down on the Volga. It wanders towards you, a brown wind-ruffled flood crawling out of a low marshy plain. A misty horizon so flat and uneventful that if you stare at it for a long time you begin to think you are looking at water. White churches, dots of white in the far distance, stand up like chalk toys. Directly below you sweeps the river—for Nizhni lies on a high red sandstone bluff; old Mother Volga, about 500 yards wide as you see it in the autumn, and in the spring thirteen miles wide, all the way across to these churches! Beyond those far churches, in the dense pine forests that stretch to the unknown north, was recently one of the strangest empires of all history.

This was founded during the Red and White wars, when some Junkers, fleeing from Nizhni, took refuge in the forests. They killed some twenty revolutionary agents sent among them, and set up an independent empire of their own. They called it the "Uren Czar-

estvo"! They elected a Czar of their own. They were some forty miles from a railroad, lost in a forest so impenetrable that it was said that not even the wolves were dangerous to people who traveled there—because nobody did travel there. But the Cheka sent out an expedition of soldiers to avenge the death of their Red comrades. And that ended the Czarist Empire of the Swamps.

"It was a mad idea!" said a Nizhni Communist telling me the story. "Mad—to try and hold out like that against all of Russia!"

This young Communist was typical of the new Russians who will make the new Nizhni. He was in his early thirties; spoke English, French, and German; was one of the editors of the local newspaper; a school-teacher; a prosecuting attorney for major offenses against the State, and an atheist. He was limited by the laws of his Government to a maximum salary as editor to \$105 a month. He contradicted my assertion that the Americans were truly patriotic during the Revolution and Civil War; he asked me if I had read Woodward's "Washington" and Meyer's "History of American Millionaires." And he added that while the Communists were materialists it did not mean that they hankered after worldly goods; they had faith in their ideals of what was right and wrong—a faith that recently was strong enough to send fifteen young

Nizhni Communists to a voluntary exile in Siberia, merely because the Party thought they should go out there to work among the peasants.

I had this amazing young man in mind when I sat on that old wooden bench looking down on the Volga. Behind me, in a neglected grove, was a dead church. Its windows were broken, some were boarded up; a worker's family lived in its chapel. But the sacred tableau stood untouched inside—women looking down upon Christ, figures no more stiff than those of the peasant women staring at them through the barred door. That was the old faith and the breeze that blew from that church brought no incense.

Below me, along the waterfront, lay the vast red cubes of some modern warehouses. From among them came the incessant clatter of iron-shod carts jolting along cobbled streets. The din of the waterfront came up to me—cries of fish-sellers, the grain stalls, stevedores unloading barges on their backs. I looked down on all this over a haze of almost obsolete church domes. The wind that ruffled the Volga swept past long gray passenger liners, black paddle-wheel towing steamers, gray wood barges, red petroleum tankers. These were some of the Soviets' 2,000 ships that ply between Nizhni-Novgorod and the Caspian—ships going down along the backbone of Russia. They were a portent of the New. They flew the Red Flag at their mastheads.

But behind me was something even more remarkable in this changing Nizhni-Novgorod. There stood the masts of what was then the biggest wireless experimental station in the world. It had installed a beam system in 1928, before Marconi; and had sent energy across the Volga to light lamps on that far marshy shore which only a few years before had seen the death of the Czarist Empire of the Swamps.

I wondered if there was not something significant in such a fact.

XXXVI
ROSTOFF

IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE WORKER IS SUPREME the condition of a railway carriage naturally depends upon the temperament of the porter in charge, and we were grateful, therefore, to the *provodnik* of our Moscow-Rostoff car. It was the cleanest third-class sleeping car I have ever been in.

By accident (you may be sure it was by no wish of mine) we got our place in the non-smokers' section. These are always the cleaner because there is less spitting.

My wife took the lower sleeping shelf and spread out her fur coat on the hard board, using her traveling rug as a pillow. I climbed into the upper shelf, using my overcoat as a bed and our solid little suitcase as my pillow, my feet sticking out in the aisle. I know how the Japs must feel who sleep on wooden blocks. The other two passengers in our cubicle were a young man and a girl. They reversed our performance, she taking the upper shelf and he the lower. He produced a tiny white pillow from his bag which he tucked under her curly head. She slept in her fur coat, prob-

ably for fear that someone might steal it, although no one ever undresses in a "hard," which is perfect slang for a Russian third-class sleeping car.

They were somewhere around the kingdom of marriage; either just married, about to be, or living without that bourgeois shackle. At any rate, I heard him making love to her at four in the morning. He was standing up, his arms on her sleeping shelf, his face almost touching hers (I am sure it did when my back was turned), and she was answering his low earnest mumbling with little no's and yes's and maybe-so's—like the contented mewling of some drowsy animal.

It was a very interesting performance, because romantic love is out of date in the proletarian state. In the first place, the congested housing conditions are against it—there is no place to make love in; and in the second, love per se is contrary to the Soviet ideology. It is bourgeois to make love, to whisper of romance and paw each other about; sex should be normal and impulsive, as it is with the animals. I reflected as I watched this performance through half-shut eyes that I had not noted one love theme in six months of steady theater-going in Soviet Russia. So I politely turned my back on this pair and let them go to it.

Rostoff lay ahead of me—Rostoff, with its constellation of church domes, another one of those isolated

ancient Russian cities which, rocket-like, had flamed in the skies of history, then gone out. To-day it is almost forgotten, only a market center for a large peasant region, its perfect church domes and pink kremlin lying on the shores of Lake Nero. Rostoff, in many ways, is a relic. So I thought of it that dawn as I watched the forests lighten and the white snows and dark pine trees slipping by. I did not know that, around Rostoff and Borisoglibsky, I should see strong men weeping, and have old women try to kiss my hand.

We arrived at five, too early to try our hotel, so we sat in the station waiting-room and drank tea. This was the first and second class buffet, full of peasantry in sheepskins, belted round the middle, the fur worn inside their yellow-tanned, pleated coats. There were two workers and their families waiting to catch the six o'clock Moscow train, a militiaman with his wife and baby. The most drunken of the peasants lay sprawling on the dirty tiled floor among the linoleum-covered tables, and the children played among them—strange children, dressed like little men and women in tiny pleated sheepskin coats, trimmed with fur along the edges, and wearing fat felt boots. They had small fur caps with ear flaps and forehead flap turned up, so that they looked like tiny Daniel Boones. In America, France, or England children this small would have been in prams or sitting on their mothers' knees, but here in

Russia they seemed almost animals in their early ability to get about, to fend for themselves; bright, beady-eyed, tottering about among the bearded, heavy-breathing figures on the floor, bumping into each other, so fat and wobbly that it seemed as if nothing but the broad soles of their little felt boots were keeping them upright.

It was snowing outside, a dark gray morning, the soft flakes blotting everything out beyond a few hundred feet, the eastern domes of the kremlin bleak silhouettes in the wintry sky. Outside the windy station we discovered a bright lemon-colored sled hitched to a fat white horse. The sled was shaped like a triangle with its point to the proud spotted horse; it had a ridge across its broad part for us to rest our backs against, and its bottom filled with soft hay. On this stood a little hunchbacked driver, in his eyes that mystic stare of all congenital cripples. We got in; the white horse flung up his heels, and we flew along the serrated road to Rostoff. The road was cut into a ladder of ridges by the plodding steps of hundreds and hundreds of peasants' horses. We passed a continuous line of their sleds going into town, loaded with hay, straw, and cordwood to be sold in the market.

We swept into the low broad streets that radiate outward from the pink walls of the ancient kremlin, dashing by piles of wooden wheels, sled runners, and

iron bars. "Whoop! *Beregeeze!*" shouted our little hunchback, sending peasants flying like pigeons before our galloping white nag, and we pulled up with a long skid before our hotel. It was low, two-storied like the rest of the buildings in old Rostoff, and its plaster walls were painted a bright raspberry red. They called it now "The Red Hotel," although its old name, "The Rostoff," was still written on its walls.

We climbed up a dark flight of wooden stairs, faced a man behind the glass door. He examined us carefully, then let us in. He gave us a room with a ceiling so low that I reached up and touched it, with two double-paned windows so close to the floor that we had to bend down to look out of them. On its ancient wall-paper some long-forgotten artist had painted a primitive train puffing through a pine forest. The little man-of-all-work stuffed some birch logs into our tiled stove.

"To-day is the *yarmock*," he told us, the beginning of Rostoff's yearly fair. And peering out of our windows we saw the peasants gathering, a great dark mass, hundreds of carts and horses, forming in long lines, like streets on the edge of the town. We could hear them crowding into the steamy dining-room down below; two thousand peasants from the forests and plains—the life-blood of old Rostoff under the Soviets.

XXXVII

TRAVELING "HARD"

ASIDE FROM THE *WAGON LITS*, IN WHICH ONLY foreigners, nepmen, and high officials ride, there are two kinds of railway carriages in Soviet Russia: *zhostky* and *myakbky*—hard and soft. You can travel in the *wagon lits* if you are that sort of person, but if you really want to get down to bedrock you must travel in a "hard." A bedrock, or rock bed, whose stoniness may be ameliorated a little by a *palliasse*, sheets and disinfected blankets, which you can rent from the train guard, the *provodnik*, for the sum of \$1.25.

But what of the people? Won't you have to sleep with smelly peasants? Yes, if you are traveling short distances, say merely overnight. Your next shelf-neighbor will very likely be a gentleman in shaggy sheepskins, knee whiskers, and a whiff. If you are traveling around Daghestan or the Caucasus he will almost certainly be attired with a very useful-looking dirk. Things vary. Coming up from Vladikavka in the Caucasus to Moscow, a trip of two days and three nights, the man over my head for the first two nights was a

Red Army officer. He was a fat middle-aged man, slightly bald. He wore an impressive revolver and a field dispatch case strapped to his portly side. He never spoke, but when we reached Rostoff-on-Don he almost embraced me with his smile. "Home!" he gulped, and vanished from my sight.

A peasant girl came in and took his place. She brought in enough boxes and burlap baggage to fill a truck. There is never any deviation from that: a Russian can bring more assorted luggage into a railway car than any other human on earth.

There is another characteristic, almost standardized item—the toilets, although there are degrees of frightfulness even there. You never know your luck. Going down through Daghestan, for instance, after being seasick for eighteen hours on the Caspian Sea in a bunk full of fleas, I thought I could be a plutocrat for the moment and ride "soft." The *provodnik* of the train was particularly rude to me when I asked for a single compartment, one with only two berths, for my wife and myself. He said he could not manufacture such things, the train was crowded, and we should have to take what we could get. But he did know how to use a broom, and the lavatory of his wagon was infinitely better than most of those in Moscow hotels. But still . . . Somerset Maugham said that when the toilet was introduced into China it destroyed all democracy.

Well, when democracy was introduced into Russia it destroyed all the toilets.

The shadowy interior of a Russian "hard," while the great train rumbles through the night, with strange and often savage faces frozen as if in death and bodies twisted out of shape, has a touch of horror about it. Souls defenseless in sleep. The Caucasian sleeps with his dagger, the factory stenographer puts her handbag down inside her blouse, the business man uses his dispatch case for a pillow. It is almost like a morgue, with these grotesque forms stretched out on shelves. The great hairy Slavs of northern Russia, gaping jaws and beards, forms motionless under heaps of bed clothes, with no faces at all. And once, walking back through a "hard," I received quite a shock. I saw a monstrosity; for from the upper section of a blanket roll protruded the head of an old lady in a night cap, while from its other end stuck out the four legs of a dog.

This life in a "hard" is true democracy if ever there was such a thing. There is no precedence. You take your place in line to wash your teeth in the morning, and you run with the rest of them to the *kipstok* to get boiling water for your tea. You eat the roast duck, chicken, melons, bread, and things you have brought with you or purchased from the peasant vendors at the stations along the line. Or else you eat when the train

halts at the station buffets. Seldom, very seldom, does anyone attempt to establish class barriers in a "hard." But I saw it happen once.

It was in a "hard" going south from Tiflis. A train employee, a signalman, preëmpted some fifteen seats for himself. He had done this by wedging a barrier across the aisle. He was but a minor employee with a very high opinion of himself. My wife and I approached the barrier.

"No," he said pompously. "I am an engineer—official!"

We crashed the gate, however, being foreigners and interested in seeing what this person would do next. The other passengers growled, and then with that terrific complacency of the Russians they retreated and wedged themselves in elsewhere. All except one old peasant woman.

"What are those people doing there?" she demanded, pointing to us. "Am I not human too?"

"These seats are mine," said the pompous little rat. "I give them to whom I want. I am on official business."

"Official business!" snorted she, suddenly kicking the barrier down. "Official business! Well, it's a good thing for you you are, or I'd give you such a clout on the ear!"

"Bravo!" yelled all the Georgians and Turks, most of them bearing knives. "Bravo!"

And we were quite a happy little community after that.

XXXVIII

"WINTER IS COMING IN MOSCOW!"

WITH THE APPROACH OF WINTER AT THE NORTH Pole the Russians begin sealing their railway carriages down in Asia!

They put felt between the double windows of each sleeping compartment, nail it down with board slats, and then screw the windows tight shut. It makes no difference if the windows have not been washed before being irrevocably glued together for six months. It makes no difference if the weather is broiling in Tiflis. "Winter is coming in Moscow!"

This explanation, given with a philosophic grin, is the only answer to your pleading, arguing, and ultimate bellowings for a breath of fresh air. "It is cold in Moscow!"

And you peer out of your dirty windows and see camels plodding across the hot Caucasian steppes.

You revolt. You leap out at the next stop and rush to find the station master in his little red cap. "What! Impossible!" The windows have been sealed for the winter. "It is cold in Moscow!"

You go to the police, the dreaded but sometimes

very useful G.P.U. They are polite but powerless. Winter is coming in Moscow—and that's that.

You slink back into your stuffy compartment. Your flesh begins to glisten. You sweat. The flies buzz around the oven of your cell. They light on a sausage and a large hunk of cheese that a Red soldier is biting in turns. The cheese is beginning to decompose in the heat. It runs—the flies after it.

The other passenger in your cubicle has a baby. He is feeding it with grapes. The baby peels each grape carefully. And then puts it down on the dirty window-flap. Then it eats them. Then it wipes its hands on its shirt. The father collects the pips and skins and puts them in the cuspidor attached to the floor. He adds them to your apple peelings. The flies zoom in ecstasy. They zoom straight from the cuspidor onto the precious bit of chocolate you have been guarding.

Your eyes hurt. Your skin burns. Children are galloping up and down the hot corridor. You have fought with the *provodnik* to open the end doors, but some frightened mother has immediately closed them again. The air is cut off.

Through the ghastly window you see monotonous, everlasting sweeps of mud-colored plains. The peaks of the Caucasus are far down on the horizon. They are white with snow. My God! Mountains of fresh cool delicious snow.



Printed in Great Britain

THE PRAYER OF THE NEPMAN

"O Lord, help me, a sinner! Help me to cheat and circumvent this power that I hate."—(*Soviet Poster*)

Then more sweeps of brown plain, so flat that you can spot a hayrick ten miles off.

The Red soldier is beginning to pack up. He takes his hunk of bread and what is left of the cheese and sausage, and he wraps them up in a shirt and puts them back in his wooden suitcase. Then he lies down to a well-earned sleep.

The train stops.

Passengers rush out. Some, with kettles, rush to the *kipstok* (station hot-water tap) to fill their kettles for tea. Most of them rush to the lines of peasants selling food. They are selling chickens, fresh-roasted, for thirty cents; ducks for forty; sausages, apples, little meat-balls cooked in brown dough, milk in brown stone jugs (skin of boiled scum on the top), eggs, tomatoes, melons, and an awful-looking slab like speckled brawn. These private traders line up outside the station.

The station bell gives two rings, the train hoots, the passengers race back. The train shakes on again. Beyond Mineral Water you pass through the scattered villages of the Terek Cossacks. You are excited—Cossacks! Their mud or plaster houses are painted and quite clean. On the outside at least. But like all Russian villages they are just houses and mud streets set on a mud plain. Streets of mud full of water pools and ruts, a collection of hayricks, then the bare steppe.

The family next to you is eating. At the last station Papa went hunting and brought back one of those forty-cent ducks. And now they are tearing it apart.

That family next to you! There are seven of them. Papa, Mama, Grandmama, four kids. Before they went into it their compartment was a clean board cubicle. Bare but inoffensive. Now it is a cave. Blankets and fusty bedding have been spread over the four bunks. Boxes, bales, wicker baskets. The upper loft, where the luggage is stored, is stuffed full of more bales and boxes and wooden trunks. They have brought all the bags they could get into the train. Bursting suitcases under the lower seats. Clothes hanging from every projection. The little pull-up flat table by the window is a litter of leavings from six meals. They have just finished a round of tea. Papa is stretched out on one of the upper bunks. Grandma sits by the window-flap munching some moist black bread. Mama is smoking, one portly cotton-clad leg over another. She is also nibbling at a duck-leg. The four children tear at the duck's carcass. They rend it. Bits fall on the floor. There is a smell—like a fox's den.

The Red soldier has been very kind to the baby. He has just taken it along to the lavatory. He has obviously washed its face. He lies down flat on his back and puts the baby on his chest. The baby pulls at his great grizzled jaws. The *provodnik*, with a former mineral-

water bottle, sprinkles the dirty floor. He sweeps out your compartment, knocking things with the brush out of the cuspidor, sweeping them out of your cubicle, down the long compartment. It grows dark.

A windstorm has blown up. It drives the dust in great clouds across the flat steppe, shutting out the sky, leaving only the silhouette, miles away, of a turnip-domed Russian church rising in the gloom. A crescent moon stands out for a second, then the clouds blot it out.

The *provodnik* comes in with a candle and lights your Pintsch light. And there in the dull glow you see that the baby is awake. It has crawled down to the soldier's heavy, booted feet. It has been investigating the cigarette receptacles at the end of each bunk. It has found fifteen butts. It has taken them out, spread them on the Red soldier's blanket, and it is counting them there.

You stare out of the window. There is not one light on the dark lonely Russian steppe.

XXXIX

"VOLGA! VOLGA!"

THE MOON ROSE LIKE A SCARLET BALLOON ON THAT first Volga night. It had a feeling of emptiness, lightness as it floated off the earth. It cleared the black banks and left an unbroken path across the silky water. Red and yellow buoy lights lay low down ahead. Ships came up-river like black ghosts with red and emerald eyes. Across the misty meadow shore glistened stands of silver birch. High ahead, on the hill bank, glimmered the lights of a village—a little cluster of fireflies. The *Turgenev* cut along silently, just the soft swish-swish of water curling under her keel. And in a narrow channel where we were forced close to a tug towing two petroleum barges we caught snatches of song.

The *Turgenev* swung and veered, sometimes cutting directly across river, following the buoy lights, so that at times the moon was on one side of us and then on the other. The Volga up here, below Nizhni-Novgorod, is like a succession of long lakes, cut off from open vistas by the wandering right bank. By day that right bank is red, red sandstone, wooded with autumn forests in all their glory. The left bank is always a low

green swamp. It goes on that way, with only one or two elevations, for fifteen hundred miles. All the way down to the Caspian.

It runs so, say the geologists (trying to explain the matter!) because the great Russian rivers always incline toward the right. And so the right bank is always high all the way down to the Caspian, and the only changes you see are the villages on its heights, the forests dying away, then that terrific straight line drawn across the sky—the steppes. That's the bare statement of things.

But that's not the Volga. No, thank God! The Volga is a miraculous river! Consider: in the autumn, off Nizhni, it is only 500 yards wide, and in the spring at the same spot it is thirteen miles. The harbor of Prokovsk moves miles across the country to keep up with the annual pulses of the great river. Then there is the Bow of Samara, where the Volga, flowing south, hits the Zhigulev Mountains and has to turn east to fight through the hard rock, so that it may turn due west and struggle on for the south. We went into the Bow in driving rain, the *Tovarish Raskilnikoff*—we had changed to another boat—shaking and straining in the gale. Water flicked with white caps, vast shallows in mile-wide windy bends. This was the country of Stenka Razin, famous pirate of the Volga, and soldiers below decks sang his song. Though it is sparsely settled,

the Russians still speak of these deep pine and oak forests as virgin country. And yet, as I stared, I might have been looking into the Catskills—until we rounded the bend and came to Samara with its turnip church-tops and its factory chimneys sticking up against the leaden sky.

Strange old stream on this moonlit first night! We swept close to the bank, to a stone river wall, with the ghost of a white church rising from the water's edge. Silver turbans, gleaming in the night, rising up amidst their black cypress in arabic silhouette. Makaryev Convent! Dead now. Closed. But I wondered what had gone on there. Once, peasants, looking at these fantastic domes, thought they saw God!

Strange river, flowing on sluggishly across dreary Russia. Monotonous. And yet with things like these to hold you—the country of the Maris, islands between you and the forests behind the low left shore. Shaggy-headed horsemen gallop over them, ride their flecked horses down the river bank, stare at you. And behind them on the flat lands, hundreds of queer fenced hay-ricks, like old *boyars'* hats. The dark log huts of the Tartars. That smell of the steppes when the gale sweeps the sand. Kalmuck villages, just a low series of secret roofs along the flat line of the bank. Camels pulling water-carts up through the yellow gorges in the river bank. The crows, whirling like black spray around the

church domes of Rabotki, because the bells have frightened them. They rise up and when the bells stop gonging they fly back and sit on the rigging of the golden crosses. Graveyards behind a steppe village, the crosses leaning like the trees of a dead forest. Villages built on yellow clay, log block houses and mud huts the color of the dirt. A huge white church lording it over them. And behind, where they can catch the wind, clusters of crazy windmills. They have six vanes, some of them, and waving behind a village like that they look like mad old men running along and falling off the roof-tops.

And then it is green again where the Volga islands splatter across miles of water. You suddenly see a full-sized city, its church domes glistening, standing on an isolated plateau. It is so mysterious that you wonder at its name—a name famous six hundred years ago.

Always you have come down along that high right bank; it has changed from red sandstone and forests to just a long line across the sky. The world is flattening out now. The Volga slows and wanders among its mud flats, rolls finally in sluggish yellow waves into the Caspian Sea.

XL

VOLGA BOAT SONG—AS IS!

FOR YEARS I HAVE HEARD IT. IN EVERY CABARET, tea-shop, and amateur performance. And now.

I am on the *25th October*. I have been on the *Tovarish Raskilnikoff* and the *Turgenev*. As I ride second class, I always hear these yells underneath me. The Volga Boat Song! But how differently it sounded in Chicago. How much more Russian! All day long, and most of the night, I have to listen to "Volga" or "Stenka Razin"! All day long, and most of the night, I hear the accordions going—and these yells!

And yet, although the singing beneath me now is simply abominable, it is probably the one memory I shall always carry away with me. That memory born in the dark layer of steam and people in the deck below mine. It was in the Chuvash country, below Kazan. We had just taken aboard a load of apples and peasants. We had started down the Volga again, our fresh load of fourth-class passengers still scrambling for places among the cargo below. People were sleeping down there on barrels; head on one barrel, tail on another, feet on a third. They were sleeping on bales, hatches,

toilet-drains, anywhere. Sleeping, eating, drinking, and singing at the same time. Mothers were feeding their babies at the breast. Girls were sitting up against machinery crates doing their hair. One girl with her sleeping sweetheart's head in her soft lap was fighting at the mob to keep it from trampling on him. That somewhat untidy vegetable, the watermelon, was everywhere, in all stages of decomposition and digestion. Literally, there was not room enough to swing a cat, but they danced. They danced and they sang.

A young man with an accordion squatted in a corner. Before him, on the general sleeping shelves which the *Raskilnikoff* provides, sat two young Chuvash girls. Their heads were tied in white kerchiefs: their pug noses and high-cheeked faces were exactly alike. They sat there like two birds on a limb. They were singing with monotonous little whoops: "Whoop-de-da-da . . . Whoop-de-da-da . . . Whoop!"

The accent was on the "whoop." As they sang a young man danced. He wore a black *rubaska* belted round his middle and knee-high leather boots. He was sweating. When the girls went "whoop" he flung out his arms, dropped till his hams hit his heels, bounded into the air. Then he spun. He was dancing between the sleeping shelves, in a greasy aisle, in a space about six feet by three. Drop, spin, fling.

"Whoop-de-da-da . . . Whoop-de-da-da . . ."

The Chuvash girls sang without ever moving their heads. They just sat there on that worn sleeping shelf, in that dark, dirty, sweating heat—close to the engine room—and they sang like birds. Their faces were placid and serious. They had been doing this all their lives. So had their mothers, and theirs before them. Sitting there, their hands folded in their laps, singing in the Volga boats, or in those dark little cabins on shore. It was more than an even chance that they could neither read nor write. I wondered, as I watched, what their ideas could be of the outside world. This between-decks section of a Volga steamer was probably the most sophisticated atmosphere they had ever been in. . . .

“Whoop-de-da-da . . . Whoop!”

But a few days later we were boarded as it were by three musicians who were professionals. I did not know it at first, but as I was walking past the fourth-class afterdeck a man called up to me. He was pale and bearded. A romantic vagabond—and one of the most barefaced beggars I ever came across. He asked me for money, he asked me for cigarettes, he asked me for wine.

“All right,” I said gloomily, “I’ll get you a bottle at the next stop.”

He was shocked. “A bottle! Never!” He held up a dirty forefinger and thumb. “Just a tiny, teeny, little

glass like that, so me and my companions will sing for you better."

I gave him a ruble.

The three of them had accordions. The stunt of their show was that with each new tune the clown of their company produced a smaller accordion, so that finally he was pulling squeaks out of an instrument about as big as a vest-pocket camera. It sounded like someone stepping on a cat. It went over big with the fourth class; they threw copper and silver into the romantic beggar's hat. But one man, a heavily mustached Caucasian in furs and sheepskin, a gentleman whom I had just decided I would not like to meet on a dark night, slid down heavily from his bale and said: "I, too, am an artist."

"What!" cried the romantic beggar. "What do you do? It is impossible. What town are you from? I don't believe you."

"You don't, eh? You wait! I'll get my card."

He went off, and the romantic beggar said: "I don't believe him. If he is one I'll believe him, but he'll have to show me his book."

The Caucasian came back and produced a greasy little brown book, the U.S.S.R. union registration card. Inside was his photo in kaftan, with cartridge pouches on his chest, sword on hip, and high white sheepskin cap.

"Ha!" he cried, waving a henna-stained hand. "I am not an artist, eh? What about that!"

He unfolded a poster, an advertisement of himself walking a tight rope between two minarets.

"I belong to a circus," he said. "I am going to walk the rope in Baku."

The fourth class crowded around. A real tight-rope artist! As if disheartened by such competition the romantic beggar and his lot got off at Saratov.

"*Chort rasmi!*" waved the tight-rope man. "The devil take you!"

XLI

STEAMING DOWN THE VOLGA

SHIPS BRING LIFE AND THEY CARRY IT AWAY, AND you will not realize the immensity of this simple statement until you travel on the Volga.

To-day I saw a peasant woman come aboard our steamer, carrying her baby in her mouth. She was holding it exactly as the proverbial stork is supposed to deliver them—in a cloth. There are fourteen people sleeping on our aft cargo hatch. One is a woman with two children about two and three years old. Their bed is made of bundles of clothes. The babies lie on their backs, their eyes closed to the electric bulb hanging over the hatch. Beside the woman sleeps a Tartar, a flowered skull cap on his bullet head. Another woman sleeping on that hatch has a face like weathered oak. Yet there is an attempt at attractiveness in her pink calico dress, and as she was sleeping when I passed her just now I saw two carved silver bracelets on her old wrists. Probably her wedding gift fifty years ago. Along the line of our engine room just now are two long lanes of grain sacks. Last night these places were held by peasants, sleeping against the warm pipes, lying

in long lines along the narrow passageway, so narrow that you had to walk carefully for fear you would tread on their hands. The engine room has glass windows around it, and the peasants who are awake stare wonderingly at the mechanics working on the Diesels that drive *Uritsky* down the stream.

There is a radio just aft the third-class sleeping shelves between the decks. Last night I saw the peasants standing there listening, their mouths open, to an opera singer a thousand miles away. Their wonderment was pathetic, but it recalled an amusing peasant comment on the invention. He had been listening to talk about Soviet politics by wireless.

"Devil take them!" he said. "Before, they had to say it to our faces, but now they can stay in Moscow and lie to us from there."

Among the sleepers on the aft cargo hatch are a man and woman lying on their line of wooden suit cases. They sleep with the cargo shifting past them. A dead, dazed sleep; and one wonders where Life is taking them on this Volga pilgrimage. They seem to travel with all their worldly belongings. When the peasants go off ship their arms are so full of bundles, with others hung on their backs, that the gangway men take their tickets from their mouths. They move off like sheep, herded in long lines; and they rush on in a frenzied stampede. Yesterday I saw a peasant woman with two

crying children. The ship was made fast. She seized her bundles, threw them over her sturdy back, and started down the gangplank with the mob. Her two children seized her skirts and were dragged along in her wake.

Where they are going and what they are doing God only knows! The sight is appalling. As the steamer comes to a landing stage they begin to line up. You see peasants whose bearded faces are as brown as their homespun coats, girls in light sapphire tam-o'-shanters, obvious wrong 'uns whose pallid lined faces betray a lifetime of depravity—they all pour out of the bowels of the ship. They land at some wretched village; and you wonder what the man with the face like Sin is doing there.

There are 700 people sleeping on the shelves, hatch-covers, and cargo of the *Uritsky*. There is a Persian with a multicolored coat and a stiff leg that he has to move with his hand. There is a man with no legs at all who shoved himself aboard in a three-wheeled little cart, propelling himself with iron-tipped sticks. There are young peasant mothers down there who suckle their babies as they talk with the crew. Four men, as I passed them just now, were having a beer party around a keg. Four others were playing cards. Other peasants were getting drunk on vodka sold across the counter of the between-decks cafe. As a quick lunch for the

peasants they serve small slips of salt herring. Ah, this is seeing life—to drink your vodka, chew herring, and watch the oiling of the engine room.

The galley, the kitchen for the ship, is just aft this somber bar. There are chefs in white aprons and hats, cutting up the big sides of beef, pigs, and calves we have just bought on the way. A sailor carries down a fresh-killed calf from a village. It is already skinned. The chef gets his knife out and begins to hack. He boils the head and skins that himself, pulling to get the covering off the nose. The greasy head lies glistening. That evening we have “knuckle of veal” for dinner.

At the next village, the chef tells me, we will get some fine sterlet, a little fish like sturgeon. We get them—alive!—wicker crates of them. And the cook pulls up the floor of his galley and shows me a “live car” down below: a little cell in which the water of the Volga runs through from some holes. He dumps the sterlet into the well, and I watch them swim around. Next day at luncheon, when we have sterlet, I know where they came from. This ship lives off the country.

The Volga is in flood. All day long we are passing forests in water. The tips of willows and alders and limes just show above midstream. The river wanders miles back from us through the country. At Yurino, below Nizhni, we find the river so high that the land-



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THERE ARE SIMPLETONS ENOUGH TO LAST THE
LIFETIME OF A PRIEST

—(Soviet Poster)

ing stage is hundreds of yards out in the Volga. We round up to it, see it straining against its anchor cables, the passengers rowing out from shore. And peasants already there trying to get aboard our steamer to buy bread. "Have you bread?" they beg, their Finnish faces squinting under our landing lights. This is the country of the Maris, driven up here from the Don section by the Huns two hundred years before Christ.

We come to the country of the Chuvash, see lettering and a tongue of which we had not even known. The flat-faced little peasant girls are selling red flowers, smoked sterlet, and eggs—bad eggs. The stevedores trot in and out of our ship. Mothers cry as they kiss their daughters good-by; a steamer's whistle on the Volga is just as much a heart-wrench as it is at New York. At the Spask we run up a backwater and find the remnants of old ships. One, washed away by spring floods, has nothing left but her engine, stranded on the shore; the ice has picked her clean. The peasants here try to row into our paddles, just to see how close they can come, and the girls wear little silver crescents in their ears.

A fat yellow-faced merchant from Astrakhan sits eating and drinking all day long in the second-class saloon. An officer of the Red Army, bound for Tashkent, walks arrogantly around their decks in his vivid white tunic, a revolver lanyard round his shoulder. 'A

priest in green cassock with a silver cross on his breast—brave chap!—asks me if I speak French? When I answer “Yes,” he says he doesn’t.

And neither, to be truthful, do I.

XLII

KISS FOR THE KING

BEHIND THE SIGHING CEDAR TREES WHICH LINE THE main street of Tiflis, where warrior-like Georgians ride about in European street-cars with swords and daggers in their silvered belts, stands the little mustard-colored palace of the late Grand Duke Nicholas. At the end of the walled palace garden is a photographer's shop; and outside this shop there is (at least there was) a three-foot enlargement of a distinguished Georgian official. No one passing in the streets of this very modern little capital would ever think of connecting that smiling photograph with the palace, nor of associating either of them with Amanulla Khan, then King of Afghanistan. But if the story told me is true, all three things combined to end in a rather precipitous exit of Amanulla from Tiflis—and of that smiling man in the photograph from a cold and conventional world.

It was, so the story runs, when Amanulla was returning to his uneasy kingdom. He had been entertained royally in Berlin, London, and Moscow, all three governments vying with each other to secure this potentate's favor. In England he had slept in Buck-

ingham Palace, and queer tales were told there of the domestic habits of his suite. He was taken to see the fleet, to see for himself that Britannia rules the waves. He was shown the "mechanized army" and the horse-guards. And also, at that time, there appeared an article in one of London's biggest papers saying that a plot had been discovered to assassinate Amanulla when he reached Moscow. Perhaps, in view of this serious situation, Amanulla wouldn't go?

But Amanulla did. Although the Soviet Russians hate all kings on principle, they either hate or fear Great Britain still more. And so Amanulla was accorded an imposing and most cordial welcome. He was shown the Soviet factories, the Soviet statistics, and of course the Red Army. He was shown aeroplanes and many tanks. He was shown the map, whereon he was asked to note that the sea and Britain's fleet were a long, long way from Afghanistan; and that if vassal India did stretch up to one border of his domains mighty Russia, which covers one-seventh of the globe, stretched up to him on the other hand. And this was a hand of friendship for a progressive little country, anxious to maintain its independence. And so, apparently, Amanulla and the Russians shook hands on it.

The dancing and the dinners waned and Amanulla and his fair queen took up their journey homeward

again. He would go back to put into force in his kingdom the reforms he had witnessed in other countries. A progressive and independent Afghanistan, no longer a weakling before England by reason of its ancient backwardness. And so, feted and flattered, Amanulla arrived at Tiflis. And here, so the story runs, Amanulla and his queen were given another official banquet.

It was given in the little palace which once belonged to the Grand Duke Nicholas. It is now the headquarters of the Tiflis Soviet. And here, in royal style, the Russians entertained him, plying him with caviare from the Caspian, smoked salmon from the Baltic, wines and champagne from the Caucasus.

It is not recorded, in the story, whether Amanulla drank any wine himself or not. Probably he merely sipped his glass in response to the toasts of many eulogistic speeches. It does not need to be recorded whether there were speeches or not, because, whenever Russians get together, no matter what the occasion, speeches are inevitable. And here, as the tale nears its end, like sand slipping down through the hour glass, the distinguished Georgian of the photograph made the most rousing address of the evening. He was overcome by it—and the wine—and with a brimming glass in his hand he walked unsteadily along the table to the King of Afghanistan.

"I salute you," he said, and, draining his glass, he

leaned down with the warm-hearted manners of his native mountains to kiss King Amanulla in friendship. Amanulla pushed him away.

The Georgian did not seem to notice this. He bowed to Queen Souriya; and then it was seen that his intention was to kiss her also.

Amanulla stood up. He made a sign. And then, as the appalled Georgians stared, Amanulla and his suite left the banquet room. He left Tiflis at once, without waiting for the three days of feteing that had been planned for him.

The news flashed to Moscow. Moscow demanded that the official should explain himself. But this the smiling man of the photograph could not do, as he had put a bullet through his head.

After all, how explain a warm heart to a cold official?

XLIII

ALBERT THE AMBITIOUS

"HERE," HE SAID, PUTTING DOWN AN ALCOHOL specimen between the bread and cold sturgeon, "is my kidney."

Albert had been telling me about his kidney all day. He had lost it last summer, the famous surgeon having lived just long enough to save Albert's life by removing that kidney, before he lost his own through diabetes. The Bolshies had treated Albert very handsomely. He had had the operation, two and a half months in a hospital, two months in a rest home in the Caucasus, all free of charge.

"Look," he cried. "You can see the three stones."

I looked, saw that the kidney was the same color as the cold sturgeon, and told Albert that I didn't feel hungry.

"*Bitte*," he begged in German, for he was a German colonist and that was the *gonue* he knew best. "*Wie gemütlich!*"

He was an amazing youth. Utterly unselfconscious. He told me that prior to his kidney escapade he had been thrown into prison by the Bolshies, where he had

stayed seven months, for making a speech about their interfering with the church. He said he had made that speech because his mother had always brought him up to respect the church, and he respected his mother. She had worked like a dog to see that he got his education, and she had bought him this home on the hills above Tiflis. And after all he was a worker, and when his comrades in his railway works heard he had been thrown into jail they wrote a petition with five hundred names and sent it up to Kalenin in Moscow; and Kalenin wrote back saying he should be liberated from the jug and given full pay for the time he had been in it. And—

"*Bitte!*" jumped Albert, spearing another piece of sturgeon, "you must eat!"

He sang German songs—"Oh, Isabella, du bist mein ideal"—while I tried to masticate the sturgeon. He also kept my glass full of his red village wine, which wasn't much better than grape juice. He played on the guitar.

This took place in his little worker's home on the hills above Tiflis—Tiflis, just a rut of lights now, lying in the dark valley of the Kura.

"Yes," he exulted, leaving off singing for a while, "this is all mine. I get 150 rubles a month from the factory. I own this house—although I lose money on the rent I am allowed to take—and my food only costs me about fifty rubles a month."

Both of us stared around the room; and while Albert's gaze was ecstatic, particularly as to the impressive desk with the white statue of Lenin on it under the lithograph of Stalin, mine held quite as much admiration. For here, I knew, five people were living in one room. It was a typical proletarian worker's home in everything except one important detail—it was immaculate. But it showed what really could be done when one had one's heart in it. Here lived Albert, his brother, and sister-in-law and their two children. His brother and wife slept in the white bed in one corner, Albert occupied the red sofa, and the two children slept on an iron cot by the desk. Aside from that, there was the table on which we were eating, a potted palm, a what-not in the other corner on which the kidney-jar held a place of honor, and above the entrance door were two plaster stag's heads with red-painted antlers like crab's claws.

"That is where I study," said Albert, pointing to his beloved desk. "I have already made one invention which saves the works 26,000 rubles a year. I have had my picture in the Moscow papers. They gave me a scholarship to Leningrad. I shall be an engineer."

We had been out all day with him in the little village of the German colonists on the desert-like table-lands south of Tiflis. A hamlet so small that it did not even have a railway station. The train just stopped. And

then a Georgian came galloping up with two horses and drove us back to where Marienfeld lay among its poplars and walnut trees by a dry river. The Georgians occupied one end of the muddy street and the German colonists held the other. There was no barrier between them, but when we passed the last Georgian house we came to painted walls and some attempt at sidewalks and porches—although we left the pretty Georgian girls behind us. The Georgian men and children were sitting under the walnut trees while their women shucked the corn. But all the Germans, dressed in their best Sunday black, were in church.

It was a harvest festival. All the pews were draped with ears of red and yellow maize, garlands of grapes dangled from the choir balcony, the aisle was lined with cabbages and huge beets. Apples, pears, walnuts, beans, bowls of wheat and honey lined the altar steps. The pulpit looked like a grape arbor. The shawl-headed women and girls sat in the right pews, the men in the left. They were Germans, they looked it, talked it, thought it, although they were the descendants of Swabians who had come here over a hundred years ago. But they were a little sad at the moment; on the largest pumpkin on the altar steps was carved this cynic motto: "The laborer is worthy of his hire—but the wages of this world are ingratitude."

Albert read the motto and laughed. He had long

ago left his village. When we were eating luncheon in his mother's house he suddenly seized his peasant brother's rough hand, and pointed to the horny block-like fingers.

"Look!" he said, without thinking of his cruelty. "That is the hand of a peasant."

His brother smiled, not seeming to mind it. He was too interested in my fountain pen, the first one he had ever seen. "Why," he cried, "the ink is inside it!" Albert laughed again. He laughed also as we were running through the corn fields because his brother offered to run with all of our heavy bundles so that we should not miss our train.

"I can run with all of them," said the peasant. "I can run with seventy pounds."

Albert was laughing now as we sat in his worker's home in Tiflis. His little village of Marienfeld with its peasant life lay only twenty-five miles away. But as far as he was concerned it might have been in another world.

XLIV
SO THIS IS ASTRAKHAN

A CITY BUILT IN THE MIDDLE OF A RIVER COULD hardly be dull. Yet only its incredible dreariness could have saved Astrakhan from that stereotyped phrase, "the Venice of Russia." Astrakhan, one of travel's disillusionments, is so remarkably dull that merely a few days in it will suffice to give you a sympathetic comprehension of those eccentric characters in Russian short stories and novels who have always more or less baffled the western mind—people who do such things, for instance, as blowing out their brains from sheer boredom. The most romantic thing about Astrakhan, that fabled city of the Kalmucks beside the Caspian Sea, is its wonderful name.

Its prelude, for us, had been Kamenny Yar—three Asiatic camels nibbling the willows on the bank, the Volga wandering like bright metal among the sandbars and flat steppes. Steppes like a straight line drawn against the sky, with a low line of secret roofs across the river marking Shishkinskoye, the holy place of the Kalmucks, where the god Burkhan happened to stay on his wanderings from China. At midnight, on the

desolate landing barge of Yenotakevsk, two Kalmucks came out of our ship and stared at us before going into the darkness, shivering in the shrill steppe wind, their tight-waisted pleated sheepskin coats hugged about bodies so slender and faces so delicate that at first I thought they must be girls. Another Kalmuck in a high pointed hat leaned under the landing light, smiling at our big steamer, the *25th October*, with a smile that seemed to have started back in Thibet.

And then, in the dawn, there was Astrakhan! Peering from my port-hole with a lust that had been whetted by that wonderful name for twenty-five years, I saw a windswept immensity of muddy water, a long row of wooden fish-wharves, and the slate-colored domes of a blood-red church. On the other side of the ship was another wooden wharf up which a dismal line of Kalmuck porters were toting sacks of flour from our ship—Kalmucks dressed just as you or I would be if we should suddenly turn stevedore. Not the nomads of the steppes.

A jolting ride over pitted cobbled streets away from the mud bank of the river. Open lots littered with refuse and dead dogs, rotting wooden houses, long lines of dilapidated plaster-faced brick, on into the center of the usual Russian provincial town. A dirt square, surrounded by acacias; streets laid out in cross sections whose dwellings were in that peculiar Russian

state where nothing ever seems permanent; houses either being built, torn down, or falling down. It was true that the drab streets were full of Tartars, Russians, Kalmucks, Armenians, Persians, all Asia, it seemed; but they were dressed, like the people of Moscow, with a distressing uniformity in the nondescript garments of proletarian Russia. They had been denatured by Astrakhan's urban influence. And the one bright spot of color was an Asiatic potentate from the foothills of Thibet, a man dressed in high scarlet cap and robe of canary silk; a bland, unmoved, and unmovable personage, who had preëmpted every room in Astrakhan's one possible hotel.

There was an escort of Red soldiers waiting for him in the street. And his painted and powdered aides-de-camp—an officer who had rouged the lids of his eyes—was so unfamiliar with the manner of Communism that he actually hit his *isvostchik* (jehu, hired driver) with his leather portfolio. But perhaps it was only a playful wallop that he gave the bearded Russian's padded back.

The hotels in Astrakhan have no restaurants—there is no reason, in such a city, for dining out—and it was an hour after rapping vainly at the cellar door of the "Paradise" (an Asiatic cafe) that we found a confectioner's shop, where we made a sickly breakfast of meringues and chocolate eclairs.

This was Sunday and the denizens of Astrakhan were walking out. In polished boots and overcoats they strolled down the main street. Some of them sat down under the acacia trees in the dirt square. But most of them went into the circus, a zoo, where they had a few shabby tigers, monkeys, parrots, a tortoise, a boa constrictor, and an unhappy Polar bear. The bear provided great amusement; for he had a bath in his little cage, full of dirty straw and dead leaves, and the keeper coaxed him to jump into it. "Fish! Fish!" he called to the almost starving bear. So the bear slid reluctantly into its wretched pool, and the crowd roared with laughter—because, you see, there wasn't any fish.

And crawling around the zoo was another feature of Russian life, a hopeless cripple. His legs trailed behind him, encased in long leather bags, like the fingerless mitts he wore on his hands. He flapped about the zoo like a seal and when he saw the brown bear's cage he flapped over and pulled himself upright. Then he and the bear stared at each other.

And so we left the zoo and went over and stood below the cream-colored walls of Astrakhan's ancient kremlin. Scalloped walls, thirty feet high, that had known men in armor; a great-walled bluff city in the very heart of Astrakhan, a fortress that had seen some very real fighting within recent years. For around some of the swallow-tailed battlements were

the pock marks of bullets, and similarly splattered plaster dwellings across cobbled streets spoke of snipers and sharpshooters of the Red and White wars. At its main gate rose a high tower of buff stone, stones like those of the old sun-bleached churches of Spain; a tower with deep shadows around its green bells; and behind, like five copper helmets, floated the fantastic cupolas of an empty church. We stared, wondering what could have happened to Astrakhan that its present should be so paltry compared with its glory of the past.

And then we turned to the river again, for there, we felt, no city could be dull. We came to a marketplace where the people milled like flies, to the dirty banks of a stagnant canal where the vendors lived in unpainted wooden boats, sleeping over their "live-cars" of sudac and swimming sturgeon. There they pulled out flapping fish to sell us, moonstone-eyed, scaly-flanked, with little noses as sharp as a fox's, some of them four feet long. We were offered milk boiled in gourd-shaped earthen urns, hacks of meat from a carcass being skinned, tubs of salted herring, buckets of still-swimming yellow perch, slabs of sweet pink salmon. Chinamen, six feet high, with faces like yellow idols, walked about hung with ladies' garters, second-hand corsets, pencils, knives; and a girl beggar with an unmentionable disease exhibited



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WHITE AND RED
The old régime and the new.
—(Soviet Poster)

her rotting knee in the cold sun. A barber shaved men's heads among the tubs of salted fish.

Here was glory. Glory in the great glut of blood, in the butchers' corpse-hung shops, in the bales of strange herbs and dyes, in the mounds of many-colored fruits, in the cries, shouts, imprecations, jostles of the crowd.

A peasant thrusts her arm into a wash-tub and pulls out a great flapping carp. "Buy him, dear one!" she cries to me. She makes a sucking sound with her teeth to simulate tasting. "Buy him, dear one—he's sweet!"

Yes, a city built on a river could never be altogether dull.

XLV

AND SO TO THE CASPIAN

I HAVE BEEN SEASICK EIGHTEEN HOURS IN A BUNK full of fleas!

We came down from Astrakhan. People imagine that Astrakhan is on the sea. It isn't. It's just about as close to the Caspian as Philadelphia is to the Atlantic. There's a good sixty miles of Volga between them, a Volga that splits up and wanders around like the roots of a tree, and seeps out of a muddy delta seventy-two miles wide. A Volga so shallow at its navigable mouth that the tortuous channel is marked by sticks stuck in the mud; and hours after you have been thinking you were at sea you see a Kalmuck fisherman, apparently walking on water, only twenty feet from your ship. The Caspian rolls up in dirty waves across miles of mud flats; pelicans troop with their gawky flight across the yellow evening sky; and your little steamer, with the night coming down, paddles hour after hour out to the Twelve-Foot Road, where the S.S. *Zinoviev* is waiting for your miserable body.

As we sailed out we saw the fishing fleet coming in—black, roughly built two-masters with a sort of Asiatic

standing-lug, their sharp-pointed sails, wing and wing, looked like butterflies on the calm water. Yes, it was calm then.

As we passed them fur-clad, slant-eyed men with broad cheekbones stared up at us from loads of equally strange fish—Kalmucks and sturgeon. Little skiffs bobbed miles out in the open shallow water, men in shaggy sheepskins and fur hats leaning over their sterns, hauling gill nets out of the brown sea, flapping glittering shavings of silver back into the black boats. The "carry" tugs were waiting out there in the open sea with steam up to tow these fishermen again to the land. Geese and long strings of ducks trailed along the yellow-green Asian sky. It seemed as if almost anything could happen in such an utter desolation.

And it did. An incredible thing happened. Out there, hours after we had been slogging toward the open sea, we came upon a ship. It was an engineering steamer, from the River Department, come down the Volga from Nizhni-Novgorod; and on her was a People's Commissar, one of the ten big men of Russia. We did not know this at first. We merely hung over the rail and wondered as our ship swung around and made fast to the strange ship at anchor, as men and women crossed over to us on a rickety gangplank, followed by more men bearing guns, rifles, moving picture cameras, radios, suitcases, and dispatch bags. We

wondered at one big man who seemed to shake hands all around with the other ship's crew before he came out of her, at the cheer they gave him with all the sailors standing at her rail in salute, and the scarlet banner they broke out at her foremast. But then we ceased to wonder, for we were told that the big man was a Peoples' Commissar going down to the Caucasus to shoot game. We also learned that his party had taken all the first-class cabins.

Then our ship turned, her paddle-wheels going, and we steamed on for another few hours, out to where the water was twelve feet deep. The Commissar and his suite were already below in that nice first-class saloon, eating an enormous tea of cakes and fruits, playing Mah Jong and chess; they made us so hungry, looking at them, that we went down into our second class and tried to forget ourselves in the howls and tambourine thuds of a traveling Persian orchestra.

Out in what must have been the very middle of the Caspian lay the *Zinoviev*. She was at anchor, just a few lights in the night. We paddled up to her, made fast, put a gangplank aboard, and poured into her one of the weirdest collections of human beings I have ever seen in my life—Persians, Turks, Armenians, Russians, Georgians, Daghestanese, Gipsies. They charged through the stevedores carrying loads on their backs, and scuttled around the *Zinoviev's* decks hunting for

places out of the wind. Yes, the wind was freshening now, beginning to look like a bad night.

The deck passengers seemed unaware of this. A Georgian boy and his young bride made a bed for themselves just aft the deck-house. They unrolled their baggage and spread out a heavy quilt decorated with roses. Then they put all their valuables around them inside. After that they tucked themselves in. The deck light above them shone on the man's grin and the girl's curly golden hair.

"Ai!" she cried, cuddling up. "This is a fine place."

My Caucasian tight-rope walker, whom I had met a few days before on the Volga, was also on this ship. But he had been late getting across the gangplank and so had to bed down on the bare deck. He was very glum, his henna-reddened mustachios drooped like a Chinaman's. By the engine-room was a baby, wrapped like a papoose, placed against a warm steampipe. Its mother was sleeping on a skylight. At the very stern a gaily colored Persian family made its bed, a few well-worn rugs, and their bright-eyed child tried to make a seesaw out of a stray plank. Hundreds of other deck passengers stuffed themselves in sullenly wherever they could. All of this was out in the cold wet wind—fore-runner of a real gale.

Inside the first-class saloon the Commissar's party had already rigged up a wireless set and were listen-

ing to the men of the "Krassin" back in Moscow lecturing about the Nobile fiasco. My wife and I were donated a first-class cabin by courtesy of the captain, next door to a pair of baggage bearers of the big man's party. Our cabin looked comfortable. The polished wood bunks were broad and upholstered; we had an excellent dinner of cold sturgeon and potato salad; then we lay down to sleep.

"OOOOO-oooo-o-o!" went the wind. The *Zinoviev*, her paddles thrashing, lurched down the dark Caspian Sea. "oooo-OOOO!"

It must have been an hour later when I woke up. Something was biting me. Something full grown—fleas! I hit the floor. I hit the floor, then I found that I was standing on the side of the wall. Well! Crash! I found the light. A coat, hanging on the door, stood out at right angles, my head hit the shutters. Bowsh! Chairs raced across the cabin and crashed into the washstand. Then they slid back. There were yells outside, howls from the deck. "*Ya Allah!*" from my tight-rope friend. Groans of horrid agony above the shrill of the storm. I felt the port paddle miss. We seemed to hang in the air. Boom! A sea crashed under the wheel house. The *Zinoviev* trembled, she balanced, then the old paddle-wheeler seemed to be falling away from me, falling, falling,—like a fast dropping elevator.

I thought of those wretched people on deck—the

boy and girl under the rose-patterned quilt, the gaily colored Persians; also of the People's Commissar. Well, he had helped to make a pretty good Revolution himself, but he had never made anything like this!

XLVI

THE ROAD TO KARACHAY

IT WAS NOT BY INTENTION THAT WE SET OUT TO cross the lower ranges of the Caucasus in the night. But we were anxious to get over into Khassaut, where we hoped to find two packhorses from the Karachaites; and despite the gloomy sunset we hoped for a half-moon. This, as luck had it, began to look down through its torn blanket of clouds just when we needed it most. When it caught us picking our way down the rocky slides of some precipice where the crags stood out sharp above a valley filled with mist, we blessed the delays that had led us to such enchantment. This was the road to Karachay.

History is vague about the origin of the Karachaites. It has to be vague, for it seems as if every race had passed over this part of the Caucasus and left its pocket. In modern times the 11,000 square miles of Karachay on the northern slopes of the main range have been a veritable Cave of Adullam for the discontented peoples, a refuge from Russian and Cossack. Some 3,000 of its 37,000 inhabitants are the last of the almost extinct Circassians, that valiant people who, as



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THE EASTER FESTIVAL

[The priest is represented riding on a pig with all the perquisites of his office.]—(*Soviet Poster*)

a race, fought almost to the last drop of blood against the armies of the Czar, Turk and Tartar, Russian and Asiatic, Ghugizphan and Alexander.

That is why, as you follow these pathless mountains, you will come on some cattle-breeder's *kosh* (mountain hut) in a crater where the people are such as you have never seen before. There are oval-faced, hawk-nosed men with sensuous lips and delicate hands, like the figures in old Persian prints. Their women wear bloomers and silver crescents in their ears, and stare at you across the dung fire with slender almond eyes. The girls sing to you from the shadows behind their menfolk; trilling, hesitant little songs that flutter like the leaves of an olive tree, while their men hum in variant keys like the sturdy boughs, until the leaves fall and the song dies in sadness.

The next day, after a struggle up through the root-matted trail of pine forest, night will find you in the log huts of a rock-rimmed mountain crater where the men are big-boned and wide-eyed, simple-featured like the peasants in "Evangeline," standing guard beside night fires built of whole tree-trunks to keep the wolves from their goats and sheep. The girls who hand you bowls of sour milk as you squat beside the wood fires have blue eyes and long plaits of golden hair.

These things I did not know. They lay ahead of me in the darkness. I knew only that the Karachaites

talked a language that was a cross between Turkish and Tartar, and sounded like Chinese; that their country was a land of "water wet, grass green and mountains steep"; and that I was surely and steadily climbing into it, away from the sophisticated little *kurort* of Kislovodsk, whose chief delight was an oddly shaped rock which the rest-hunters there had named "The Castle of Craftiness and Love." As it would be in such places.

For the first stretch, into Khassaut, we had departed from Kislovodsk in a *lineaka*, a little flat mountain cart. We sat sideways, using our blanket rolls as a backrest. It was driven by a Cossack and drawn by two wire-muscle Caucasian horses. Standing still, these little animals looked weak and weary. But when they were moving, dragging the cart up the bouldered mountain roads, or sliding down with the rear wheels locked by chains, then these little horses put up such an exhibition of sure-footedness and staying power that we came to adore them. Especially when we could clamber aboard again and rest our tired legs.

"No, you!" yelled the Cossack, as a rear wheel began to send stones down the cliff. "Can't you see the road—fools!"

The road leading into the upper reaches from Kislovodsk gave no indication of this country. It climbed instead into an amazing upland as smooth as a lawn.

Fold after fold of vivid green hills with not a stone or bush on them. Here and there, only, a ledge of limestone breaks through; and a peep over the grassy edge into the gray gorge of the river beside us assured us that we were actually in the Caucasus. Then we began to notice that we were quite alone in this world. We had been climbing for hours without even seeing one sheep. One or two Caucasian horsemen had passed us, magnificent in their broad-shouldered *burkas* (cloaks) made from black felt, wearing their silvered daggers. Finally I saw what at first seemed a haystack on fire, but a low wall of mountain stones around its bottom, and a man sitting before a smoky aperture, showed it to be a house. Our first Karachaite.

"He lives poorly," sniffed our Cossack driver, still feeling his ancient superiority over mountain tribesmen. "Life is hard here."

This was true. But in the little village lying by its stream down below we found one or two houses (built since the emancipation of the Karachaites by the revolution) that even had tin roofs. We forded the stream here and kept on fording it, climbing onward and upward along its bouldered bed into the higher mountains. As each darkening ridge loomed across the night sky our driver gave a groan, an expressive wave of his hand, and a sad little singsong to tell us that we must go up that—and over it.

Just before night did descend upon us at the foot of one of these ridges, we made the Cossack unlash our baggage so that we could get at sweaters and heavy coats. We were freezing. And it was only then that the fellow saw fit to mention that there had been a snowstorm yesterday in these ranges. He was anxious to get on, and battened down the baggage with hitches over everything.

"Hurry," he urged. "Bad roads ahead." But we continued to ascend more smooth hills. Their upper levels were rounded and covered with Alpine flowers shining like stars under the flitting moon. We went across rounded tops carpeted with buttercups and wild daffodils. And it was from such a windy spot, staring across forty miles of ridges and valleys, that we saw the eternal snows of Mt. Elbruz—18,000 feet—rising like a white ghost over the snowy range of the central Caucasus. Beyond it lay the country of the Kabarda-Balkarians, people of Turco-Tartar and Arabian blood. Their capital was once a summer center for Byzantium.

The mountains below us dropped off sharply. And it was while we were paused like this, filled with delight, that we heard soft padding behind us. Two superb Karachaites came up from behind on their glistering black stallions. In a soft drawl they asked us whence, whither, and why. Our answers might very

well have surprised them, but they gave no sign of it. They lit cigarettes, the glow of the matches lighting up sharp beards and high cheekbones. Then, wrapping their white hoods over their fur caps, they dropped over the edge.

This, the Cossack told us, was where we got off and walked. With its rear wheels locked the cart went over the edge and down the slope. This was actually the road, although most of it was merely shelving slides of bare rock. It was hard not to slip and fall down it. A high ridge on our right showed sharp as a knife against the rising moon. The valley was flecked with shadows, striped with the horizontal lines of colored rock strata; and here and there a little thread of silver showed where the moon caught the river down below. The cart rocked ahead of us, always threatening to go over into space. But it couldn't spill anything; and we realized now the Cossack's foresight in battening down things. Its progress was like a ship in a storm.

The hours crawled along. It got colder and colder. Finally things became desperate; I could no longer light a cigarette, my fingers were so numb. I demanded if there ever was such a place as Khassaut.

"Here it is," said the Cossack.

He got off and rolled back a strange gate that had a wagon wheel on its latch-end. The moon had gone under by now, and in the gloom I saw the white bullet

of a minaret, the squat mosque underneath. There were no lights in the village. We drove past sleeping thatched huts. Then we stopped before a building which the Cossack told us was a school. Khassaut would put us up there for the night. So said the Cossack, but not so the schoolmaster.

"But these are strangers!" bellowed the furious Cossack after a terrific hammering on the schoolmaster's window. "They are your guests!"

A muffled voice from inside told us to clear out.

We then tried the *Ispolkom*, the village council chamber, where our reception was different. As soon as he got it into his sleepy head that there were strangers outside, the secretary of the *Ispolkom*, who slept in one of its two rooms, unbolted its door. He was—noble fellow!—suffering from toothache, the rabbit's ears of a bandage projecting above his head. But he led us into his own bedroom, where his wife eyed us from among their bed of quilts on the board floor, and told us to spread our beds beside theirs. When we said we did not wish to intrude on their privacy (it was not altogether from modesty) he led us into the town council chamber. Here he brought some birch logs and started the iron stove. He gave us a pail of sparkling water, a glass full of butter, and his only lamp.

We got our pocket primus going for tea, then spread out our beds on the floor. The *Ispolkom* secretary, apol-

ogizing for the rude reception we had received from the Kuban Cossack schoolteacher, explained that as one of the seven Russians in this village of four hundred Tartars the Cossack probably did not care to open his door at night. The Tartars were peculiar. Six years ago they had broken into this very council room and killed the secretary of the *Ispolkom* and his wife.

But that, we decided, was six years ago. And as I threw open the windows of the committee room to let in some air I looked out on sleeping houses and the white minaret of a little mountain village seemingly as peaceful as its own whispering stream. But when I took a notion to go out for a walk I found that our door was locked—from the outside.

The present secretary of the *Ispolkom* was taking no chances.

XLVII

HORSE AUCTION

DESPITE THE COLD, WHICH CHILLED MY SPINE before dawn, the Doolittle (my traveling companion) and I had stretched out on the floor of the Khassaut council chamber for our first good night's rest in several days. It was shattered, however, about four in the morning by our Cossack driver who had come to say good-by. Hammering on the stone wall below our window, he complained that he had had the deuce of a time trying to wake us. But we bore him no ill will; he had brought us into Karachay; he had, despite the schoolmaster's refusal, found us a place to lie down; and now he must climb back over the mountains again. We raised ourselves from our warm flea-bags to clasp his hand. Good-by! And now for some more sleep.

An hour later a Mongolian head appeared at our doorway. Then it withdrew to come back with more Tartar heads, all of them in fur hats. I shall speak of the Khassaut Karachaites as Tartars because this particular lot were of the Turco-Tartar type. They were, it developed, about to hold a meeting—if we would only dress. The young secretary of the *Ispolkom* (the



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WHY THE BOURGEOIS NEED CHRISTIAN
PROFESSIONAL UNIONS

Christ leading the strike-breakers.—(*Soviet Poster*)

inevitable Russian official), his toothache better, sailed into their midst upbraiding them for being so uncivil; it was not often that foreigners came to Khassaut. The Tartars in return gave him the devil for accusing them of such a thing. They knew how to behave; and we could sleep there all day if we wanted to. But why couldn't they look? We dressed.

With that courtesy always found among remote people unspoilt by tourists, the secretary of the *Ispolkom* and his wife had put their room in order for our breakfast. His wife was our handmaiden, dipping a tin mug into the bucket of clear water fetched from the other side of the valley and pouring it over my head and hands as I washed. This is an ancient custom. A Tartar on the balcony outside was intensely interested in what I was doing with my toothbrush. And I, seeing his even white teeth as he smiled, wondered how he could keep them that way without such an implement. A mutual curiosity.

"Yes," groaned the secretary's wife, "they hold meetings all day long. Meetings, meetings, meetings! It's usually about horses."

Horse breeding and selling, it seemed, was the life of the Khassaut Karachaites. An auction was going on outside. This was being held around a three-forked tree trunk stuck up outside the council chamber—the same strange three-forked hitching post that we were to see

outside of *kosbes* and even in the capital of the Karachaites. It was also the auction block. With the men of the village lounging around, leaning against rocks in the warm sun, a bearded auctioneer in belted Caucasian *tcherkaska* and soleless boots, with the dagger in his belt, called out the bids as he rolled a cigarette. He did so casually, urging no one to buy, and he seemed to knock off when he thought the price about right. At any rate, with these keen judges of horseflesh, born in the saddle, there was not much chance of anyone being foolishly reckless. A first class three-year-old went for \$100, a cow for \$19. Once or twice, in his casual manner, the auctioneer forgot and called a bid lower than the one just offered. On such occasions, smiling jovially at his fellow villagers, he would begin all over again. Another Tartar, for my amusement, shinnied up and sat in the three forks of the auction post—a childish bit of fun that seemed incongruous with the silvered dagger in his belt.

A rude and simple means of depicting this scene would be to recall to you the crack Circassian horsemen who used to snatch handkerchiefs from the circus grounds at full gallop with the shows of Buffalo Bill. Here they were at home! And if you can picture those horsemen in a little mountain village of thatched stone houses with a white minaret standing up against some gray limestone crags, selling and buying horses, gallop-

ing down the main mud road after wayward gray cattle, smoking, gossiping, lying flat on their faces in the warm sun, you have a picture of Khassaut on this Sunday morning. Friday is the Mussulman day of rest.

Like all good Mohammedans they were letting the women do most of the hard work. In one stone hut above us the women were softening a sheepskin. They were kneading it between wooden pinchers. One woman pumped up and down on the long handle while a girl turned the skin between the notched wooden teeth until it was as soft as chamois. It would make part of a white *tcherkaska* for the family sire, or a softly padded saddle.

Outside another stone and plaster hut, on the turf roof of which was already growing a good crop of grass, an old crone was weaving on a handloom. Another old hag sat beside her spinning thread from a plummet-like spindle which she set whirling with a rub against her leg. The Fates of the Karachaites! Of what battles with the Cossacks could those old women tell? In another house the young girls were making felt for rugs and *burkas*. They fluffed out the finely combed wool with the string of a bow (as I had seen it done in Anatolia); then they dampened it and rolled it into a homogenous mass on a grate of wooden slats.

The wool came from the village sheep. Their implements were made by the village craftsmen. Cloaks,

saddles, shoes, everything came from this mountain-side. Other women worked in the meager potato fields, the only village crop. Still others walked across the single log which bridged the little Khassaut River and returned swaying under yoke and pails of spring water. The mosque, which no woman dared enter, was completely carpeted with their small rugs, vivid in designs achieved with native dyes. And as I watched them, their tiny sons, dressed in little *tcherkaskas*, with miniature daggers in belt—just like father's—rode beautiful black stallions down to water. And the little girls worked.

Asiatic, the women were still the drudges, despite their emancipation proclaimed by the Soviets.

Climbing the minaret, I looked out over thatched roofs to the limestone crags above them. Did the Karachaites still use their mosque? Yes, said one, it was about half-full nowadays. Did they violate the Koran and drink strong drinks? Yes—grinning—many did. Was life better now? The answer was a satisfied nod, for under the Czars the Karachaites had been a most browbeaten lot; their good lands, once held by the Cossacks, had now been given back to them. But despite the placard of agricultural statistics and advice in their council chamber, and the one of Lenin, printed in Karachaite, showing him pointing the way to the New Life—to tractors and away from bullocks, to

textile mills instead of handlooms—one felt that, good mountaineers as they were, these cattle breeders had a long climb ahead of them on the rocky road of evolution. The young men, of course, thought they had already arrived. One of them, while we were standing on the minaret, to show his contempt for religion, that “opiate of the people,” cupped his hands behind his ears and called to the faithful in mockery of a muezzin.

But he seemed to strike a false note.

XLVIII

CLIMBING THE CAUCASUS

IT IS EXTRAORDINARY HOW SELDOM IN ONE'S TRAVELS one comes across that elusive thing called Romance. But I felt it that morning in Karachay. To begin with I awoke to the knowledge that we had our horses and in an hour or so I should be in the saddle. How long I should stay in it was another matter. Then the first sight that met my eyes was the nubbly white bullet of a Tartar minaret. I walked up past the mosque and washed in Narzan, that sparkling mineral water which the Caucasians call "the drink of horses." So far, good. Then, as I was eating my breakfast—a ten-egg omelette for the two of us—the young secretary of the *Is-polkom*, who was going into town with taxes and the percentage from yesterday's horse sales, was looking over his automatic—a Spanish weapon made by Beistegui Hermanos, dangerous from both ends, I should say. Presently our kit lay ready before us. The trails of Karachay lay ahead of us.

Going outside, I found all the village men and not one woman waiting to see us start. While we waited for Djhon-hote, our Karachaite guide, to fetch the

horses, I had to answer questions. What time was it now in America? In New York, I told them, many people were just going to bed. Was New York in Berlin? Not exactly. Did we have snow in America? Summer? Was it hot? Hot as hell, I told them. Did we have sheep? Did we have a hawk like that one flying overhead? Yes, I said, we had chicken hawks, but our sheep didn't have fat tails, and a black sheep in America was a rarity. (What a joke!) Did we have gold or paper money? I managed to discover an English two-shilling piece in my pocket and I gave it to the President of the Khassaut Soviet. He immediately tested it by bouncing it on a rock. Yes, it was silver. Was that the head of the Czar? Yes, King George. They were a bit silent.

There was a blanket roll on either side of Marusha's padded saddle, and on top of that a rucksack full of frying pans, kettles, a cheese, tea, raisins, etc. My own horse, Kolya, carried a typewriter and a small suitcase in the saddlebags. We were off. The Doolittle had started ahead walking up the valley road. Djohn-hote walked at Marusha's head. And Kolya, as soon as I was atop of him, went charging off at full gallop. I kept him at it as hard as I could, not wishing to lower America's rating before these centaurs. A Circassian horse is no armchair. Whoa, Kolya, you!

Half an hour up the road I found the Doolittle sit-

ting naked in the mountain stream. Bald-headed, with his billy-goat whiskers and the inevitable spectacles, he looked like the Royal Nonesuch. "Come in," he cried, "the water's fine." So I did. I stripped and lying down in this icy stream of the Caucasus I let the rapids run over me. Then I shot out.

"It's a matter of principle with me," said the Doolittle, stuffing some *makhorka* in his pipe. "I never pass up a good place to bathe on the chance that there might be a better place further on. Usually there ain't."

While we were waiting for the packhorse to come up—the entire load had shifted—I washed a towel and a shirt. The Doolittle washed his socks. We left the road and struck up a trail into another valley. It was Alpine, carpeted with flowers, shining in the warm sun. A grouse got up and thudded away from us. Kolya nearly put me in the stream. Near the top of this pass we were joined by a mounted mountain guard and an old Karachaite. And if I ever saw a strange sight it was these two armed men lying down among the forget-me-nots and buttercups. We had halted for luncheon, sharing our cheese and eggs with them; and the little foal which had been running free beside the Karachaite's mare lay on its back and rolled in the grass. Then it sighed and went to sleep. They were, said the Karachaite, bound for the capital of Karachay.

If the weather held they would make it in two days.

But the head of that craggy palisade, Little Bermamoot, was already threatening to lose itself in a snow-storm. The weather was getting thick. Zigzagging up a smooth mountainside we came to a summit from which we looked down over fifty miles of the Caucasus. These were the lower ranges, green and smooth as velvet. I could see the shadows of the clouds floating over their magic carpet. Beneath the distant clouds was the hard gray of rocks, the jagged mountains, serrated with the white snows of their ravines.

Up here we found an occasional Karachaite shepherd, sitting his horse in solitary grandeur, a veritable sentinel on the mountain peak. They were wrapped against the chill winds in their square shouldered black *burkas*, which they use for both cloak and bed. When the wind blows from the right they shift the *burka* around so that the opening is on the left; if dead ahead they shift it completely around. It covers both the rider and the horse from the saddle backwards. These shepherds always rode up to us to shake hands, exchange the gossip of the valley with Don Quixote the guide, and ask for a cigarette. Their little black Caucasian sheep formed the only break in the green of the mountainside.

Up here in this emptiness, where horse trails faded into pathless grass, we encountered other horsemen

bound for various destinations in Karachay. Some were bound for civilization as represented by Kislovodsk; they rode in their finest black boots without soles and as soft as gloves, with silvered daggers in their belts, white hoods dangling down the backs of their wasp-waisted black *tcherkaskas*. Arrogant dandies of the mountains, they rode their horses into each other by way of frolic on meeting.

And one of them, with the thin, hawk-nosed face of an ancient Persian—their faces were already changing!—raced past me with a yell which set my horse off at full gallop along the steep mountainside. *Ya Allah!* it must have been the Prophet that held me in that soft-padded Circassian saddle. Kolya leaped a small gully and came to a full stop. The Karachaite sat there, waiting for me.

I then suggested to this descendant of Timur that we have a quiet smoke. As I held out the case the wind blew three of the cigarettes out of it. They fell between us, and the Karachaite leaned down easily from his saddle and picked up two of them. But as he reached for the third his saddle slipped and he fell, his one hand already on the ground, as lightly as a cat.

A little later when we were jogging along, as if to wash out this stain on his prowess, he leaned down and picked me a buttercup.

XLIX

AMONG LOST RACES

"**A**H, DADUSHKA, DADUSHKA!" CRIED OUR DON Quixote on this dawn. "It will be a fine day!"

The Doolittle, who was beginning to resent the way these swaggering Karachaites always called him the "Old One" or "Grandfather"—just because of his gray beard—refused to leave his flea bag. And when I tried it I found that Don Q., who had taken my soap yesterday without asking for it, was now walking about in my only pair of shoes. As the Karachaites have the habit of chinking their stone huts with manure I decided shoes were necessary and demanded them. "*Nu vot!*" grinned Don Q., pulling them off his bare feet, "may I have your razor?"

I told him he most certainly could not. It was my last principle; there were three things, I said, which a man did not loan another—his toothbrush, his razor, his wife. He was a bit piqued about it at first, but then he gave way to the charming grin characteristic of these Mohammedans and began calling me "Dear One." I went down to the stream for my morning bath in pure ice-water.

It was my first cloudless view of the main Caucasian range. Its snow fields glistened under the warm sun. Kolya and Marusha, our two horses, did not look as if they had moved during the night; they were still eating. I did not blame them, for the grass and buttercups in this untraveled valley looked as fresh as a salad.

The freshness of the Caucasian woodland is almost unbelievable. The opposite hillside was forested with scrub oak, and under the pines which I had seen silhouetted against the moon the night before were bright clumps of azaleas and tiger lilies. The flats of grass by the stream were gay with buttercups, forget-me-nots, and white star-like flowers like wild daffodils. Our side of the mountain was dotted with mountain birch, gnarled and shimmering in the warm sun. And the delightful thing about a Caucasian birch forest is the absence of dense undergrowth; there is just the white, lichened trunks rising above the lush grass. The shadows are like plush on the green floor. Blue and white butterflies flit over the orange lilies and wild roses. The forget-me-nots lie in carpets. Shafts of wild iris tremble beside the swift streams—streams copper-green in the pools and white as cotton where they plunge down through their rapids. And above it all lie the white glistening snows.

We rode toward them, stopping at one pool to swim

and have a try for some trout. "I'll cook all you catch," grinned the Doolittle, lazing in the sun; a sun so bright that my fine gut cast looked like a rope in the crystal-clear water. Not a rise. (But I gave the Doolittle thirty-five to cook one rainy sunset later on; which he did—curse him!—in oil of sunflower-seed.) We bathed and washed some clothes, with a few twittering sandpipers to keep us company.

This part of our journey, going across the mountains to the little Karachaite capital of Utsch-Khalan, was virtually trail-less and untraveled. But in one birch spinney we found a Karachaite family, on one of their inevitable treks after grass, drowsing in the shadows beside their herd of brown goats. A little boy was watching the herd, the man was sleeping, and the woman was—as usual—suckling a child. We forded a stream here, and Don Q., sitting on the packhorse's rump, nearly got his second bath for that morning when his horse stumbled, belly-deep in the swirling water.

Down in the hot valley we struck a mountain road; and here, for an instant, I thought I was back in Spain. A pack train of Karachaites, dark and swarthy under their flapping black sombreros, plodded by in the red dust, their line of wistful little donkeys staggering under bulging goat-skins of sour milk, saddlebags, axes, and family goods. The women, their mouths

muffled against the dust, each carried a swaddled child. But in another valley, higher up in the mountains, I saw a Karachaite father tie his baby to the saddle, the child swaying and weeping dolefully as the horse swung down the steep trail. No wonder they can ride!

And here, in this valley, began the prelude to one of the most unbelievable nights I spent in the Caucasus. We picked up another lot of Mohammedans who had brought their great gray cattle down for grass. We went up with them to their hollow mountain ledge, riding with the gray herd through the deep forest of resinous pine. The steep trail was so traveled that the roots of the pine were laid bare, and they squirmed and crawled like great snakes under our horse's feet. A doddering old Turco-Tartar, whose face looked as if it had been carved from weathered mahogany, was invited by one of the younger tribesmen to ride on his horse; an act of courtesy that was consummated with much punctilious bowing.

We were climbing to a green valley bowl lying in a crescent of mountain peaks 10,000 feet high. There were, said the Mohammedans, some fine bears in these woods.

I did not see any, and except for a few brightly painted woodpeckers I had never in my life seen forests so desolate. I rode ahead, thinking how infinitely little the crowd of Mongols behind me had changed

since the days of Genghiz Khan. I heard in the stillness before me the hollow call of a distant cuckoo—like some magic bird directing me on my pilgrimage to an enchanted land. And then there it was—the enchanted land.

I had come out from the forest and found myself on the rim of a bowl of pure green. Looking down into it, I saw thousands of sheep and goats, great gray steers, horses with flying manes galloping furiously across the unbroken floor. There was a deep lake at the far end, cupped in dark pine; distant smoke coming from two little clusters of log cabins; three black spearlike peaks of stone 10,000 feet high; and then a lip where the bowl broke off short. I found myself staring down into blue and green ranges of the Caucasus that ran on for miles. Even now their valleys were blending in blue mist, their rock faces flaming in the dying sun.

The Turco-Tartars I had come with rode past me, crossed the bowl, and vanished again into the pine forest that held the far rim. Still feeling myself under the spell of some mountain magic, I rode down to the log cabins, met a cluster of men almost twice the size of the Mohammedans who had just gone beyond; and the girl who poured water over my hands as I sat in the welcome ceremonial before their log fire had a thick plait of golden hair down her back and wide-set blue eyes.

L

WHAT PRICE CIVILIZATION?

WE MADE CAMP IN AN ABANDONED WINTER KOSH at the foot of the main range of the Caucasus. A pleasant spot, with splendid isolation. The stream down the valley of which we had been working during the hailstorms all morning still rushed past us, foaming over its shale ledges to the deep notch of pine forest below. Beyond, black and white, rose the rocks and snows of the main range. Snowstorms were swirling along its upper reaches. We saw the white beds of ravines going up under the clouds.

The grass was deep and luscious in this uninhabited valley. Kolya and Marusha, our two horses, had been hobbled and turned loose to eat their clever little heads off. They ate all day long. Kolya, that morning, when we were negotiating a gorge where one of his feet placed eight inches to the left would have meant cheerio for us both, switched round his head to eat a wild iris. I like Kolya, but I wish he wasn't always thinking of his stomach.

The *kosh* was just a lean-to of rock slabs and sod-covered saplings placed against the face of a cliff. It



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Imperialists are suppressing by sword and bloodshed the actions of Eastern peoples for national freedom.—(Soviet Poster)

was so old that the jagged rocks and roof-beams were glistening like tar with the wood smoke of ages. A dark little hole, with no windows or chimney.

As I write this I am sitting out flat on the pile of sisal that takes up half the dirt floor. A log across the floor marks the end of the bed. Don Q. has started a roaring blaze out of wet wood with one gum chip. The Doolittle has just taken off his shorts (imagine such things in a hailstorm!) and is holding them up before the fire. He is dressed in shoes and spectacles, and has just remarked to Don Q. that it's a good thing it isn't last night's *kosh*, with all the women around. "Nitchevo," says Don Q., "they wouldn't mind." A strange comment to make about Mohammedan women. I have just put on some rice to boil, hanging it over the embers in our teapot. Unless my rice cakes fail, this evening promises to be as comfortable a night as one could ask for.

This morning was an ordeal. We had counted on making an early start. But our Karachaite hosts in last night's *kosh* delayed us with a breakfast of cornpone and the butter we had seen them making in a goat skin. Then there was the matter of inspecting a Karachaite's mashed finger in the daylight. After using up the last of my peroxide to soak off the cotton, and seeing the bone sticking out, I decided that my potassium permanganate treatment of the previous night was not

good enough to stop gangrene; I urged him to ride the forty miles he would have to go across mountains to find a doctor. I felt rather insistent about this because when I removed the bandage, telling him above everything else to keep his finger clean, his mother picked up the gory mess and held it in the palm of her hand together with the naked seat of the latest baby. But these Karachaites—God bless them!—don't know what a germ is.

The hardness of their lives is shocking at times, especially when it is raining. They have to tend their flocks. As we rode down the cloud-drenched valley we saw them sitting on their desolate horses, cloaked to the eyes in *bashliks* and black *burkas*, standing guard over the bleating knots of their fat-tailed black sheep. Karachaite boys, barefooted in this downpour, raced their horses, bare-back, along the steep mountainsides in pursuit of wayward cattle. Karachaite shepherds stood guard over stone pens full of lambs. Their brutes of dogs, which in any other country would have been trained to assist them, seemed to have no other task than to lie outside the *kosh* doors and fly at all strangers.

We saw Karachaites on the march in search of better grass; wattle pens already up for their lambs, young colts feeding beside their hobbled mothers, drenched children watching the stupid movement of longhorned

gray cattle. The men, wrapped in *burkas*, sat in stolid resignation on the shafts of their awkward two-wheeled carts, carts full of women and children; sitting there waiting until the clouds left the valley so that they could resume their eternal march. These Caucasian uplands, flowered and green, a veritable paradise when the sun is shining, hold a wretched life when it rains.

When a mountain Karachaite comes in out of the rain it is to a dark, smoke-filled hut, a bed of sisal on the floor, a bowl of sour cream or curds, some soggy cornbread, and a bit of roasted sheep a few times during the year. He sits by the hot wood-fire until the moisture steams out of his clothes. He takes off his moccasins and fills them with fresh straw, since he never wears stockings. He lies down to sleep, very often on the dirt floor, in the same black felt cloak that has shielded him from the rain of the hills. Perhaps because he is drenched when it rains he seldom uses water to wash with. The stream flows by, he might bathe in it, but it is unpleasantly reminiscent of the chilling rain.

But such a life was ours also for that night and for many others. It is not so bad when you don't have to do it until you die.

The crackling fire that Don Q. had started with one gum chip was all the more delightful because it

meant refuge from the storm. The bed of sisal meant a dry night's sleep, rolled up in warm flea-bags—a place to drowse and think and smoke. Clocks and hours stop in these isolated valleys of the Caucasus. The half-side of sheep, wrapped in one of Doolittle's shirts, would soon be purified by the flames and turned into succulent *shashlik*. Don Q. was already using his long dagger for its legitimate purpose these days, hacking up the mutton to slide down a long skewer of wood. He sang as he worked, turning the roasting sheep over a bed of rose-red embers. From time to time he took it away and sluiced it with salted hot water. On other embers I had a frying pan full of rice cakes. I dusted them with a little of our precious powdered sugar, and added some raisins.

The Doolittle put himself completely at my mercy by melting the soldered handle of our teapot. He forgot that it was not full of water. But he retrieved himself by repairing it with his trusty pliers.

The rice cakes, for a wonder, were a success. The last I cooked were in the mountains of British Columbia eight years before. Don Q. was crazy about them. He picked up the hot rice directly out of the frying-pan and shoveled it into his bearded mouth. His Tartar, high-cheeked face gleamed in the firelight.

"What price civilization?" asks the Doolittle, filling his pipe. Don Q. makes a bed of his saddle felts and a

saddle. He wraps himself in his hairy black *burka*. The hairier it is the more distinguished, and Don Q. looks like a square-shouldered bear. We throw on a few more sticks of firewood to keep the light going while we undress.

I go outside for a last look at the night. It has stopped raining now. The moon is lighting up the main range of the Caucasus. The peaks are hard and sharp; black, with ravines of glistening white. Our flowered valley is drenched with pale light. Marusha and Kolya, munching placidly, stand deep among the lush grass by the stream. I go into the warm *kosh*, slide in between two layers of my flea-bag, and use my warm flannel shirt for a pillow. I lie on my side, watching the dying fire as I smoke a last cigarette.

I would go through many a drenched day for a night like this.

LI

LAMB A LA KARACHAITE

IT WAS NOT, SAID THE DOOLITTLE, IN ACCORD WITH the principles of western hospitality for our host, Adami Ezdonov, to give us his family bed, the best seats by the fire, all the sour cream we could drink, and then try to sting us on the price of a sheep. But this was the East, where Time begins. ("That's why you people in America have to hurry so much," said the Doolittle. "These people have used up all the time there is before it gets to you.") In this case we decided that if time meant nothing to Adami Ezdonov it should also mean nothing to us. We would hold out as long as he did. He had asked seven rubles for a sheep and we had offered five. After which we began to talk about the hail-storm.

"We've got to stick it," declared the Doolittle as the hours dragged along. "If we give in now we are beaten all along the line. Don Q. will tell all the other Karachaites that we are easy marks."

So we sat there around the fire, the only light in their hut of stone and sod. Our host was squatting on his hunkers watching our faces for some signs of soften-

ing. His wife, from a withered dug, was suckling a two-year-old son. Don Q., who was capable of talking forty minutes without letting anyone else speak a word, was reciting some blood-curdling tale of the hills—or the Communists—to the other Karachaite shepherds. The Doolittle and I made more tea. We seemed so satisfied with it, occasionally nibbling a rubbery bit of Adami's tasteless cheese, that the old man began to crack. He said if we would wait a minute he would go along the *kosh* and speak to another *kbassain* proprietor. He came back smiling and said that the proprietor would let us have a sheep for six rubles. We said five, and began to talk about going to bed.

"Six is cheap," said Don Q., his mouth watering for mutton. "In the bazaar you would have to pay eight; six is cheap for the mountain."

"Five," said the Doolittle.

There was, it seemed, a bargaining *cul-de-sac* from which neither of us could back out. Adami seemed adamant, and in all seriousness the Doolittle and I did really begin to arrange our beds on the pile of sisal, feeling a little gaunt over the thought of the nice crisp mutton we might have eaten. But Adami wasn't going to lose five rubles. Just as we began to undress he suddenly thought of another *kbassain*. He went out in the night and stayed there ten minutes. When he returned he had miraculously acquired a sheep for five

rubles. The other *khassain*, said Adami, had just returned to the *kosh*. A palpable ruse to save his face.

He brought the lamb in by the fire and showed it to us. All right? He began sharpening his knife on a whetstone. "Good Lord," gasped the Doolittle, "he's going to kill it in here!" But then Adami took the live lamb and knife and went outside. I followed him. And there, in the gray night with the black bowl of hills all around, he cut its throat and drained its blood into a copper saucepan. Then he brought it inside.

First he hacked off its forelegs. Then he slit the skin on the stomach from head to tail, and hung the carcass from the main wooden support on our dirt-floored hut. He pulled off its skin as if it were a shirt. A fine fat-tailed sheep! One boy, his face black with soot, sharpened a stick and cooked a foreleg on it over the embers. Another, seizing the decapitated head, stuck a sharp stick up the nostril and began toasting that, fur and all. Fifteen minutes ago the sheep was alive. It was now paunched, and our host was busy cutting out some of the choice bits of its insides, his forearms glistening with blood as he worked the sharp knife.

During this operation we were served with a strange cooked cheese, filled with butter, over which was a cornbread crust. Sweet-sour gummy stuff. It was cooked between two iron pans, placed face together

in the embers. We ate it by breaking off a piece of the crust and scooping out the rest of it with crust and fingers. Daggers loosened up the bits that stuck to the bottom.

The blood of the sheep ran down the pole. The eyes popped like chestnuts in the roasting head. The child took out the charred head and scraped it with his knife. Adami Ezdenov hung a huge iron pot on the chain that dangled from the sod roof over the fire, and threw in chunks of sheep, using a wood block he had just been sitting on to chop up the lamb's spine and wiping the axe on his boot between each stroke. He washed the toasted forelegs and dumped them, unskinned, into the boiling caldron. Then with his knife he slit the cheek skin of the charred head, tore off the lower jaw, and dropped that into the pot. It reminded me of a time, in Aragon, when I was eating a Spanish mountain sheep in the dark; I felt something crunch and found a loose tooth in my mouth—not mine, the sheep's. Having split the sheep's head, Adami consigned that also to the bubbling pot; then the fat tail. Good Lord! What next!

The girls, in their flowered bloomers, helped in this ritual. They had little silver rings on their forefingers, crescents of gold for earrings. One of them, with arched eyebrows, gray-green eyes, and a face as slender

as an almond, poured water from a long-necked copper urn on Adami's bloody hands. In a few years she would be as worn as the old hag by the fire who seemed too parched to be giving her breast to her two-year-old child.

When the big black pot boiled, and the bubbling foam rose, Adami scraped off the dirty discolored scum with a stick and swept it into the ever-cleansing fire. Well, the sheep was cooking. The men were smiling and rolling cigarettes. Their women, in the shadows—a little bed of white turbaned heads—began singing. Strange, hesitant little songs. The men hummed in different keys. The women sat under suspended saddles and silvered bridles. With a sharp stick Adami prodded for a bit of lamb. He chewed it inquiringly. Not ready yet—back it went into the pot. More salt. More wood. The flames lighted up the soot-blackened stones and stick roof. We lay stretched out on the bed of sisal. The old hag stripped the entrails of the sheep and tied them in bowknots. Soon there would be hot meat for all of us. Let the hailstorm lash our sod roof.

Adami took off the pot. The steaming bits of sheep were placed on a split log. We took them in our fingers, tearing at the bones with our teeth. Our hands were greasy. The slender girl stood before us, the copper urn in her silver-ringed hand, pouring a thin stream of water into our cupped palms. We washed ourselves.

Don Q. spread out his saddle-cloths and used his saddle for a pillow. I crawled into my flea-bag, and as I lay there, lazily smoking a last cigarette, I heard the women eating whatever of the sheep we had left.

LII

WOLF FIRES

SHUT UP AS THEY HAVE BEEN FOR CENTURIES among the mountain pockets in the Caucasus the Karachaite shepherds have developed—or maintained—a distinct code of what to them constitutes the best manners. They are, too.

When you arrive at their mountain cabins by horse or foot the chief men come out and stand in a group around the amputated tree that always serves as both hitching post and meeting place for their settlement. You dismount and they shake hands with you gravely. If you don't talk Karachaite, they engage in casual conversation with your men. No sign whatever is given that they intend to invite you to stay in their cabins; and perhaps this preliminary palaver is an ancient form of inspection, for if they ask you to be their guests they virtually give you their home.

Then, while you are standing there, very often in a heavy rain, you become aware that two or three of the younger men are unloading your horses. You must not try to help. Yes, you inform them, you have come across the mountains from Khassaut; and to-morrow

morning at 6 o'clock you are going to start off for Utsch-Khulan, their capital. One of the sheep herders, who has either volunteered (or been selected) to offer you his cabin, leads you to its door. The fierce dog that always lies at its entrance flies at you, and he beats it off with a stick. You go into the log cabin.

There you see what is very likely another reason for the delay around the hitching post; for it is obvious that the entire contents of the family bed in one corner of the dirt floor have been removed to make room for yourself. Streaks of dark damp on the packed earth show where a woman has been sweeping. This general tidying up to make their home fit for the guest is the rule.

Inside they ask you to sit down on the log which marks off the bed from the rest of the floor. By the log is the fire kindling, built on the dirt floor, its smoke going out through a wattle chimney or through chinks in the roof. Among the glowing embers, for you usually arrive at these mountain cabins at the close of the day, the one hot dish of their day is being baked—a disc of gray, soggy, steaming cornbread. But they do not give you this to eat immediately upon your arrival. That they eat with you, in company, squatting on their haunches, plastering the unpalatable bread with watery butter made in a churn of goatskin. But first they give you the ceremonial bowl of thick

lumpy, sour milk. This wooden bowl is passed from mouth to mouth, with whiskers, and often strangely diseased faces, buried in it deep and lustily. So you are not eager to take more than your first, ceremonial, and comparatively untainted quaff. A row of milk-dripping mustaches is cleaned with vigorous sucking and with the backs of grimy hands—and now you are a member of the family.

I arrived thus one night at a mountain *kosh* in the Caucasus, where, as I have written, the inhabitants were such as I had never seen before. There was about them an engaging Arcadian simplicity, with no hint of Tartar or Turk in their wide level eyes and the blond fairness of their womenfolk. They might have been the descendants of some far wandering Norsemen, migrants of the Don or Dneiper. But it was useless to speculate on their ancestry; it was lost in the mists of antiquity, the wars and wanderings of races that had left this seed to take root in this rock-rimmed refuge in the upper ranges of the Caucasus.

In the winter they live in one of the little sod-roofed villages that lie deep beside the mountain river shooting down to the Kuban below the towering peaks. In the summer, for three months, they live with their herds in this high mountain bowl, like a lip, a shelf along the ridge of the world looking down into the ocean of peaks and valleys stretching away in deep-

ing blues to where the snow fields glow in flakes of purest rose in the flaming sunset of the main Caucasus. We felt a lordly sense of space and grandeur, which may be partly responsible for the superb stature of these mountaineers. It would be a small-souled race indeed that did not come to feel itself supermen in this bowl of beauty.

They were prodigal with their background, the dark wall of pine forest. The cows, goats, and sheep were herded for the night in great corrals made of whole tree-trunks. The flocks of bleating kids were hurried up from the grazing bowl by their boy shepherds, each satyr-faced little animal rushing to its mother. The great gray bulls and bullocks were allowed to stay out and roam through the dew that turned the great bowl to silver in the moonlight. The women of the *kosh* went down among the cows, and I heard the sound of half-a-hundred udders being milked. The voices of young girls came in snatches of plaintive song. Lights appeared from the always open doors of the log cabins. These cabins were fashioned without the use of any saw, from whole tree-trunks, without any chinking between their knotted lengths; and the glowing wood fires inside made them look like monstrous skeletons. Fires were lighted at the four outposts of the settlement to keep off the wolves.

I thought they were joking at first, but Ismail, my

host, told me that the wolves had taken three sheep only two days before, leaping over the barrier of sharp and jagged tree branches that were placed like a barbed-wire entanglement against them along the forest side of every corral. We walked around the village circumference in the night; and as we came to each roaring watch-fire, made of entire trees, we saw the youths who stood as wolf-guards. "A hero!" smiled Ismail, patting the shoulder of a bashful boy shepherd.

This, said Ismail, was his life. He had grown up beside the wolf fires. But he wanted to see the world. Down in the village he had delighted in the new school that had come with the Revolution—it was the gate into the open world—but his father was a kulak. He owned great herds of cattle and employed men to work for him. Ismail, though it was the one thing he had dreamed of, could not continue in the school and become a professor. The sons of kulaks cannot attend school until all the poorer boys have been cared for. So what did he do? Ismail purposely made himself poor.

His father sold his herds and went to work as a clerk in the village coöperative. Ismail went with the few sheep they retained and watched over them himself in the mountains. The road was clear now, he was twenty-four, he would go to school again during the winter. From his bed on the dirt floor he dug up a book, a French-Russian grammar. We sat there by the



شرقي آزادلى اوچون چالیشان قهرمان ايشچى وه كويكلىرى دمير پنجره لر اردندا چوريترلر.
 شرقي آزادلى اوچون چالیشان قهرمان ايشچى وكندلىرى دمير پنجره لر اردندا چوريترلر.
 كۇندوعار خالقلارينك آزادلى اوچون چالیشان قهرمان ايشچى وه دايخانلارى دمير
 كوزه نكلر ايچىنىد سالىلار.

Printed in Great Britain

They are leaving to rot behind iron bars the brave workers and peasants who are striving for the freedom of the East.—(Soviet Poster)

firelight and he read out certain words to me, tried to make sentences. His great, simple face made me think of my schoolbook version of the boy Lincoln.

He talked to me of the Russian writers he had delighted in: Tolstoy, Lermantoff, Gogol, Pushkin. He asked me what New York was like, and Paris, London, Berlin; and I tried to tell him, while the wolf fires glowed beside our log cabin in the Caucasus.

LIII

IN A KARACHAITE KOSH

A DAY THAT HAD BEGUN IN SUNSHINE AND romance was ending in rain and desperation. Murky clouds buried the lower ranges of the Caucasus; hail cut us in the face. Twice we had stopped. Once, seeing an encampment of Karachaite shepherds, we hoped to find shelter but discovered them sitting stoically in their *burkas* beside out-spanned carts. Later on, unable to stand the slash of sleet, we dumped all our duffle on the ground and squatted on it, huddling under the two felt *burkas* that we possessed between the three of us. With my clothes sticking to me I reflected dolefully on the lives of the Karachaite mountaineers. I also cursed the Doolittle.

Two hours back we had heard the weird bee-like bleating of lambs and seen a mountain *kosh* in a plateau among the hills. Don Q. had suggested that we should drop down to it, but the Doolittle, still feeling full of beans, had insisted on continuing our pilgrimage. There would be another *kosh* further on. There must be; these mountains must hold plenty of *kosbes*. Two hours, with the Doolittle slipping and slackening,

night drawing on, and we found a Karachaite in the clouds. Yes, he said, there was a *kosh* down below. He was driving four bulls. There is no use dwelling on it, that wretched trek along mist-drenched ridge and mountainside, my shoes squishing water in the stirrups, and the shepherd, wrapped in *burka* and *bashlik*, riding ahead of us. I pondered, as I rode, on the various restaurants I had known. If only there would be a warm fire and something to eat after all this.

Then the shepherd began twisting his horse down the slippery grass-covered mountainside. I heard the bleating of lambs; and there, down below, I saw a few circles of stone and a long ridge of sod, from which came blue smoke. A *kosh*! By it rushed a mountain stream, and there was a gully with a single log across it for a bridge. As we halted, wondering whether to ride the horses through water or try to lead them across that slippery passage, a group of hooded men emerged from the stone wall of the *kosh*. Their faces were hard and firm, high-cheeked, generous-mouthed; and their hands, as we shook them—each one in turn—were rough and dirty. It was a ceremony, it seemed, that we had to go through with. You cannot ride out of a cloud and into a *kosh*—not without being invited. They eyed us.

We were asked to come in. I rode my horse down the gully, through the swirling water, and up the bank.

Then I left it. As a guest of the *kosh* I daren't do anything more. They unloaded for us, they carried in our bags. They beat off the fierce dogs that flew at us, and we found ourselves in a low stone-walled hut as dark as a tunnel. Then the Karachaites ran for their firewood; they threw on logs that they must have carried for miles. The *kosh* flamed. There was no chimney, no window; the fire was just laid on the dirt floor against the stone wall. The smoke was sucked out through a hole in the sod roof.

As the flames rose I saw a ring of strange faces around me: an old woman, her head wrapped in a scarf like a turban, suckling a baby; an oval-faced girl who was leaning forward trying to pull off my boots; a row of children, dirty with soot beyond all description; and the face of my host—Semitic, sensual, and smiling. . . . He had his youngest child between his knees. It had been eating sour cream; its face was covered with it—and the father cleaned its hands by rubbing them with his own. He sat there on a stump of log, beside his hearth, watching us for fear that we might not find pleasure in it, find it too humble, while his womenfolk brought us wooden bowls of sour cream, cheese, and slabs of soggy cornbread. Their bed was a litter of sisal piled in one corner from which the whole family had cleared in order that we might lie down. They sat amongst saddles and tubs of sour milk,



اينقىلاب ايجن كورهشەن قەھرىمانلارڭ قانلارى بەدەلىنە بىز «موپرى» تەقويە ايتىڭلە مۇقابىلە ايدىلەي!
 انقلاب اوچون چالیشان قەرىمانلارڭ قانى عوضە بىز «موپرى» قوتلىندىمىك ايله جواب وىرەلم!
 اينقىلاب اوچون كورهشەن قەھرىمانلارڭ قانى بەدەلىنە بىز «موپرى» قوتلىندىمىك ايله
 جواب بىرمەلىيىز!

Printed in Great Britain

Let us avenge the blood of the heroes shed in fighting for the Revolution by strengthening Mopr.—(Soviet Poster)

the women in the shadows, while we passed the bowl of sour cream from mouth to mouth. We all drank deep. As I drained the last of it, dirt and all (for courtesy makes you do such things with primitive people) our host sighed. He took a cigarette from us, made some jocular comment about the hail to another Karachaite, and the tension in the *kosh* was dispelled.

The soot dropped from the birch-saplinged roof as we hit it with our heads. From bitter cold we were soon in danger of being scorched. As the fire mounted we had to lie farther and farther back on the felt blankets over their sisal bed. A Karachaite of massive features sat beside me. A girl held a copper urn while he washed his hands and feet. Then he stood up and began to murmur; he was praying. He knelt down and touched his head to the ground—twice—in the direction of Mecca. He stood up again, murmured his prayers, and then bowed to touch his head to the ground again. An orthodox Mohammedan. He propitiated Allah while we discussed our dinner. In the shadow (the Mohammedan women are always there) two girls were making butter by shaking cream back and forth in a goat-skin.

We killed a lamb and as we sat there eating the hot meat from the iron pot I glimpsed a calf in the section of the *kosh* next to me—there were five families divided by wattled walls, and in the one beyond I heard

a cream separator going! Cream from the separator and butter made in a goat-skin; our host giving us his bed and the best bits of meat, and his wife and daughters eating what we left—this was West meeting East.

The girls sang for us as we lay in the sisal. Fluttering little songs, while the men hummed in different keys. The songs always ended in sadness; then the notes broke, like falling leaves. Only one song had a lilt to it, and I asked what it was. A girl whispered what it was to her young husband (she had a face like the Vladimir Madonna) and he, laughing at such absurdity, translated it for me. It was the song of the freedom of Mohammedan women under the Soviets—the New Life.

And as I fell asleep, wrapped in my flea-bag on the sisal, the girls and men stretched themselves out on the floor. The girl with the face like the Vladimir Virgin was watching solicitously over a rather strident young Karachaite whose head lay next to mine. A Sam Browne belt and revolver proclaimed him a Young Communist. He talked of America, and, like other Karachaites, asked me if New York was in Berlin. No, I said, and neither did I agree with him that Hoover, out of desperation, would recognize the Soviets just at present. I was rather admiring him for a few minutes as a happy transition between new Karachaite life and the old. But then he said:

"You are not a Communist, eh? Well then, let me tell you something: Unless America recognizes the Soviets, if you are not a Communist, you will not be allowed into the U.S.S.R."

It was time, I thought, to go to sleep.

LIV

TRIBE OF THE OLD MAN

THERE WAS ONLY ONE OCCASION IN OUR WANDERINGS among the mountain shepherds of the Caucasus when we were refused hospitality; and that, I feel sure, was chiefly due to the miserable disposition of our Karachaite guide, whom we had picked up in Utsch-Khulan. He was a whining fellow, always moaning about something being wrong with his spine and worrying about what we were going to do to his saddled-galled horses.

On this night we had come down to a mountain shelf from a pass which the map said was 9,800 feet high. Maybe it was; there were clouds a-plenty around and below us. This shelf was as cold as the Arctic. It was the one night, unfortunately, when we would have been willing to sleep under a crude roof no matter how dirty the floor was. But "Spine," as I now called him, put up such a whining show of it to the owners of the log cabin that we lost caste with them. They regarded us suspiciously and left us to make a tent of my ground-sheet as a refuge from the dew drenched grass.

"Spine" was too stricken by his malady even to collect wood for our fire, much less roast some lamb on a spit to make us *shashlik*. So I cooked rice and raisins over a meager fire. Don Q., our former guide and wrangler, would have had these Karachaites stepping it, and sour cream to spread over the roasting meat, because he liked such things himself. When the "Spine" groaned and lay down to sleep behind our miniature tent, wrapped in his felt cloak, with his saddle for a pillow, I suspected that he would desert us in the morning.

He did. And after various arguments we got a local shepherd and two horses. The shepherd also was ill, complaining of "fire in the stomach"—probably the common affliction of worms—and his mare, which I was given to ride, also had her four-days-old foal with her. A miserable combination that gave me all the sensations of riding a quick-lunch. For the mare, stopping to eat whenever she could, always had the foal running up to her for more breakfast, luncheon, or dinner. At other times the beautiful little foal ran just ahead of its mother's fat legs, always threatening to trip us and send us bouncing down the mountain-side.

But our shepherd was either related to or a friend of every other shepherd in the adjacent valleys; and the next night, after a day of ascending and descend-

ing mountainsides, we came to another isolated cluster of stone huts along the sides of a gorge. The owners of the best hut turned out to hand it over to us. We bought a whole sheep, and lay by the hearth-fire full to drowsiness with a dinner of mutton roasted on wooden sticks and sweetly garnished with a coating of rich cream. The corncakes in the *kosb* were hot and light. And here, squatting by the primitive fire, I met the finest specimen of Karachaite manhood I had ever seen.

He was a superb specimen, a good six feet high, broad and deep-chested, every line and feature of his bronze face those of the ideal Mongol aristocrat. Talking not a word of my tongue, his eyes were quick to grasp the expression on my face, his laugh and white teeth flashed at every chance for humor. And yet, though he was twenty-four years old and the figure of some ancient princeling, he was afraid to take a cigarette from me in front of his father.

Here, in one of the thousand isolated pockets of the Caucasus, we had stumbled on an untainted kind of patriachial existence, the tribe of the Old Man. The teaching of the Communists might have begun to penetrate into the villages; the emancipation of women, slow as it was, might have been started down there; but here in this distant valley the women were thought as little of as the animals—even less—and the

first son of the leader was as obedient as a child to his Grand Old Man. Allah was still worshipped with absolute fidelity. And when the Doolittle and I shared our wine with the other Karachaite, this splendid young Mohammedan laughingly discouraged our offer to him. When the sheep was killed it was the father who came to administer the knife-stroke that cut its throat, leaving his son and another retainer to do the ugly work of skinning and disemboweling. They would not eat a piece of meat that had not been bled to death. And a pig around such a Mussulman community would have probably resulted in the sudden illness, if not the death, of the man who dared to bring it there.

There was, in fact, something very close to a battle on that mountainside shortly before dawn. A tribe of Karachaites had come over the pass with their herds in search of fresh grass. Another tribe, as it happened, had just come up the valley for the same purpose; and they met on the plateau just above our stone huts. Now these grazing lands in the mountains have a complicated form of ownership. In one sense they belong to nobody. But it is the unwritten law that grazing lands adjacent to a village are sacred to its own horses and cattle. So much so that a stranger coming to town is not even supposed to pasture his own horse on them. The mountain lands are, if held at the moment,

the hereditary rightful grazing lands of their particular *kosh*.

Therefore it came about that while the two strange bands were beginning to get further from words and nearer to daggers in their argument, our own princeling, with his Grand Old Man, appeared in their midst and told them to clear out. We woke to the laughter of the young princeling and the triumphant voices of our own clansmen. Our own guide, the chap with "fire in the stomach," being the only neutral among them, had been acting as a peacemaker. He grinned at us and slapped his Daghestan knife. "I made them shake hands," he said.

It was understandable why this valley life was so remote and unspoilt; for above its only entrance was this snowy pass and below was one of the worst trails I have ever seen. It went down in slippery little surfaces along sheer mountainsides, and then became a series of foot-holds among a chaos of glacial rocks. Rocks so formidable that nothing less than dynamite could shift them to make a better trail; they were almost protection enough for the coveted grazing land. But Karachaite horses, men, goats, and cattle cannot be stopped by anything short of the perpendicular among the wild mountains in which they and theirs are born and die.

For the foreigner it is not quite so pleasant. I did



Printed in Great Britain

You ought to help these brave revolutionaries who are standing up against the tyranny of the native and foreign capitalist.—(Soviet Poster)

not like the habit of the foal always trotting just before its mother's legs. I did not like the solicitude of the mare, which paused once or twice as we were balanced on a ticklish place, to see that the little foal was getting time to scramble over it. And I wondered what would happen to that tiny animal's young and weak legs if the worst should happen. Which it soon did!

The trail, which had often been merely a ford along the rocky bed of the stream, was here a broken ledge about eighty feet above the water. Ahead was a slide of a few feet down the slippery surface of a huge rock. An easy thing for a man to negotiate but difficult to coax a horse into trying. I had dismounted to pull my horse down when to my despair I saw the foal trot along the narrow path of the soft soil to nuzzle its mother. It slipped of course. I tried to seize its tail as it went over—a gesture that left me standing and wringing my hands as the delicate little creature went bumping down among the rocks.

But it landed, as if directed by some providence, flat on its curly tail on a ledge soft with grass and buttercups. It stood up shivering and gave a frightened cry. I felt a push behind me, an answering whinny, and was just in time to stop my mare from trying to climb down the mountainside to reach her foal. She strained there, her forefeet partway down the slope, whinny-

ing in a way that turned my calloused heart upside down.

The Mohammedan, who had seen all this from further down, came along the mountainside like a goat, leaping from rock to rock, and took the sobbing foal in his arms. We all trembled—the mare and I and the Mohammedan—while he went over the foal for broken bones. We were reunited as a family further down, the mare carefully licking the foal to see if everything was all right. As we rode down through the dense birch forest that almost immediately closed upon us old Fire-in-the-Stomach and I felt drawn together by reason of our common fright. The foal was all right, thank Allah!

He touched my hand with the heel of his in token of thanks and understanding as we lighted cigarettes.

LV

STYMIED AT THE KLUKHOR PASS

I AM 9,000 FEET UP IN THE AIR—IN MORE SENSES than one. I am lying on my duffle, dumped on the grass above the snows of the green glacial lake that lies at the last 300 feet of the Klukhor Pass. The Klukhor, over which I meant to climb out of the Caucasus and down to the subtropical shores of the Black Sea, is reputed not to be free from snow until August. I tried to take horses over it on June 27. Hence my present position, seated beside a waterfall that drops over a mile into the valley below, a frozen lake at my back, gray cliffs and a greenish glacier behind that; and a night ahead of me without fire or even a tent, all because of a little gap of some twenty feet.

This gap is the break in the overhanging snow-shelf that rims this side of the lake, through which the ice-green water pours over the lip of its waterfall, fine as spun silk, to form one of those foaming white rivers that thunder down through the pine and beach forests of the Caucasus. It is possible for a man to drop off this overhanging snow-shelf and wade through the lake outlet without any trouble at all. But while

the snow-shelf supported two men—we tried it—it was too ticklish a spot upon which to risk horses. At the present moment the actinic rays of the Caucasian sun are boring into my head through my hat. My feet are wet with the snows I have been tramping through, trying to find some way around this beautiful, but indomitable, glacier lake. (The pools of melting snow on its surface are emerald-green.) We gave it up, and Yusef, my Mohammedan, has gone back with the horses.

I saw him, while I was making my tea, trudging across the snow fields 2,000 feet below me. He was going down to a hut in the pine forest below to tell the two Russians there what we think of them for saying the snow and ice was strong enough to bear horses, and to bring back another Mohammedan Karachaite to help carry my kit, which, having been selected for a packhorse, weighs a good hundred pounds. We shall be our own packhorses. Yusef is also under orders to bring back some firewood; we are well above the timber-line up here.

My tea—and how I wish it were coffee!—was made on a fire contrived with my penknife and a board which I found sticking out of the ice by the lake. I did not ask how it got there. It was wet. I whittled a pile of shavings, dried them in the sun, and built the tiny fire between two rocks, on which perched the black

tin kettle. I ate four of our eggs. Then I lit a cigarette and am now trying to think out our escape. It's no use; if Yusef doesn't come back with another Moham-medan I am stymied. I sat there watching the water-falls pour out of the sullen glacier.

But the mountains, now that my ears can hear other things than the waterfall, are full of strange sounds. A little while ago I heard a dull thud, as if a boot had struck a rock; and I whirled to see a section of the cliff break off, bounce, bound, and come spinning down the terraced faces until it lost its momentum in the lake snows. Hollow booms come from the glacier, but its grayish-green face is impassive. To see it move I should have to watch it for years. I hear other waterfalls, pouring down the sheer face that holds the glacier. Streams white as cotton course down the lichened limestone cliffs on my left. Wherever I look my eyes meet the broken bowl of mountains. Chacha, one of the highest peaks of the Caucasus, is directly opposite me across the emptiness ending in my waterfall. Its sharp tip is black and cold, flecked with white snow.

A few clouds appear behind the jagged mountains, raising grotesque heads, as if watching. The sky has been a flat blue, with a sun so hot that it scorches my hands. Then a gray mistiness pours silently over the sharp crags behind the glacier. They tear it, show

rents of blue; and then it closes over, resting, anchored on the cold peaks. The sun slides down behind the limestone escarpment; old Chacha fills with blue shadows. Good Lord, how bitterly cold I am!

The Klukhor Pass is the highest point on the old Sukhum military road that was built to exterminate the Caucasians, who, aided by their wild mountains, did not surrender to the armies of the Czars until 1865. By that time, as a race, they were virtually destroyed, and the road lost its purpose. To-day, as you follow the road, you come to places where it has completely chipped off from its cliffs. You have to lead your horses along the glacial rock-scrap of the steep mountainsides, go down into valleys, and climb them again. Above me, like a mockery around the almost perpendicular mountains which form the back-drop of this glacial lake, runs a straight line. This is the road, cracked off for long stretches, lying under slopes that bury it in others twenty feet below the steep slides of snow. Its lower stretches climb through dark pine forests where the rocks are deep with spongy moss.

I slept last night in a shepherd's log cabin, in a flowered Alpine valley that was once the bottom of a prehistoric lake. The man was away, taking a sick Russian down to a doctor in Teberda. The Karachaite woman knew no Russian, but she gave me a cake of hot cornbread, baked in the embers of a fire built on

the dirt floor. It was one of the poorest shepherd's cabins I have ever been in. There was not even a hole in the shake-roof for the smoke to go out of. It blew out, instead, through the gaping logs of the walls. There was an eight-inch gap by my head, and the dog tried to come in through it during the night.

I awoke this morning at six o'clock and tried to catch some trout. I wanted to get them when the sun rose over the mountain to warm their crystal lake. The Karachaites say that is when the trout play. "You can see them jump!" Yes, but they could also see me, and every fly on my cast. The water was as clear as air. The trout failing, I did the next best thing; I took a swim. I swam out into the cold water of the lake—and then raced back. I dried myself in the morning sun and ate multitudinous eggs and tea. That was this morning, just twelve hours ago.

It is six o'clock now. The sun has gone down behind this bowl of mountains. The clouds are sinking down over each peak—coming down to sink me—and there is no sign of Yusef and that other Mohammedan. I feel both sad and mad.

LVI

ON TOP OF THE WORLD

YUSEF AND THE OTHER MOHAMMEDAN DID COME back. They found me lying under my ground-sheet among a square of rocks 300 feet above the frozen Khlukor Pass. And I was freezing too.

I had found some "Solid Heat" in my dispatch-case. By burning seven tablets I had succeeded in making a cup of tea. I had rigged up a sort of tent with a remnant of the wet board found in the glacial lake, and I was lying under this, with a candle, trying to read through until dawn. It seemed impossible to sleep with one's spine a stick of solid ice. Except for an occasional doze we lay there shivering and awake. The dew fell so heavily on the black felt cloaks of Yusef and the other Mohammedan that they lay beside me in the moonlight like glistening black bears. The clouds that filled this crater of peaks in the hours after sunset soon drifted away. The night was set with stars. The cliffs of snow and rocks were like skeletons of black and white. The moon filled them with its strange liquid light.

Morning came, a sky of mauve behind the high spear

of Chacha, a light blue along the eastern cliffs. The Karachaites made a fire and dried the snow moccasins over it, then filled them with our little store of dry sisal. These moccasins had buttons of rawhide sewn around their soles, so that the feet could get a purchase on the shifting snow.

We were sitting on top of the world as we finished that last meal. Then, with the sharpened sticks the Mohammedans had brought up the night before, we started to cross the snows. A fall off the snow-shelf into the glacial lake started the day for me. We climbed the other shelf and around the sixty yards of snow face that makes that rocky corner the hardest part of the whole pass. A slip there, but a stick hurriedly jammed into the snow stopped another fall that might have been serious had it gone on. Then came the long climb up the unbroken snow that blankets the whole pass. We felt here that the worst of it was behind us; there was nothing to it now but the long trek on the other side until we should find some shepherds and horses. A walk perhaps of two days.

But the other side held disillusionment. There was no trail. The snows went to the cliff edge and then dropped sheer into a valley as white as a bowl. We could not get down. Casting about for some way to get around this impassable barrier of sliding snow, we went down a little island of rocks that ran down

its face; and here we tested our luck. If we should slide off the snow and go down to the valley it might not be so bad. But if we slipped and went over the next cliff, almost directly below, it would be no good at all.

Well, man proposes— There is no use dwelling on one's disgust and humiliation for having to turn back, on the abysmal gloom that filled one's soul, or the plaguy feeling of uncertainty and doubt about one's own self when, on the snow fields later down, I met a party of three men going up to the pass. Two of them had gone over it the previous year; they smiled when my Mohammedans told them about this year's snow—the worst in fifteen years. I lay in the sun among the pine trees down below and drank the dregs of defeat. If those other men went over— But they came back, trooping down the trail from the glacial-scrap just at dusk. They agreed with us now. And so did the Sukhum mountaineering doctor who had already crossed the pass three weeks before, before the snow started to melt. And so did twenty-four Lenin-graders who had come all the way down here to do the same stunt. We lay there without appetites around our log fires and cursed our luck.

Morning, and the long ride back down the mountain road. Dreary now. Back to Teberda and the Doo-little, sitting by the window of our little board-room,

which he had, in splendid isolation, already turned into his usual shambles. He grinned.

"I knew you were coming," he said. "The 'Mountain Wireless' got the word down last night that you could not get over. I expected you before this."

I slid down from my horse and told the Doolittle how Yusef had been chasing our horses all the previous afternoon; they had wandered up a tributary of the river. Then I flung myself down on the wooden bed, enduring the remarks of Yusef's father. The ice-shoes he would have provided to bite through the soft to the hard old winter's snow, the steel-tipped alpine stocks, and so on and on. They all seemed so sensible now, in this warm valley, when it was too late. I swore.

"Bless my soul!" cried the Doolittle, "what are you feeling so sick about? Man proposes and God disposes—this is the Caucasus!"

He had, bless his heart, bought a bottle of champagne to celebrate my return. He had also bought a big bowl of wild strawberries. We ate them. The Doolittle, who is fourteen years my senior, raised his glass.

"The worldly hope men set their hearts upon— Ha! Ha! Well, young fellow-me-lad, this all goes to show you. You can't buy a railway ticket over the mountains of the Caucasus!"

LVII

THE NEW PRIESTHOOD IN RUSSIA

THE COMMUNISTS SAY THERE IS NO GOD. THEY laugh at priests and priesthoods, but theirs is one of the most austere, indefatigable, and unself-seeking brotherhoods in the world. If it is not a religion, which term they despise, it is a cult. And however brutal and horrible their methods have often been, there is no getting away from the fact that they see themselves as workers in the service of mankind.

There is a general idea in England and America—at least I think there is—that all Russians are Communists. Not at all; the Communists are a small esoteric body. To get into it is difficult, to stay in it is dangerous. A Communist has to keep on his toes or he will soon be dropped out again. They are the whippers-in, the taskmasters, the slavedrivers, if you will, of the most ignorant mass of peasantry in the world—120,000,000 peasants almost bestial in their stupidity.

During the days of the 1917 revolution in Petrograd, where things were so chaotic that people didn't know whence their next meal was coming—or the

next bullet—a Russian said to me, as we watched the populace racing through the streets: “They have let out the sheep from the pen—now who will ever put them back?”

The Communists are doing it. They have been doing it since the day the Nicholas station went up in flames in 1917. They are the vanguard of the proletariat, disciplining a country which covers one-seventh of the globe.

The other six-sevenths of the world has been damning them ever since; damning them so violently and with such hate that the truth has long since been lost in the mass of accusations and refutations, so that, to-day, to get any real idea of what a Communist is you have to go to Soviet Russia itself.

I was surprised therefore to find that only one out of about every hundred Russians was a Communist. I was surprised to find them a brotherhood amazingly similar to the Jesuits; similar not only in the fact that for them the end always justified the means, but for that resoluteness of self-denial and sacrifice which makes them an order of missionaries, who are sent out by their party to any part of the world in the battle against Capitalism.

In Nizhni-Novgorod I talked with a young Communist six of whose friends had just been dispatched into Siberia to work among the peasants; an actual

exile. In the black steppe below Kiev I talked with a young schoolteacher, sent into a miserable village from Leningrad, who spoke with us in perfect French, lamenting the fact that it had been "necessary" to send her young husband to another village, hundreds of miles away, to stay there all the long winter.

Then there are the ten Peoples' Commissars in the kremlin. They live in the palaces of the old Czars, with servants and seclusion—and a fleet of twenty-five Rolls-Royce motorcars. Their actual salary is limited to the party maximum of \$112 a month. But a thousand dollars a month could not bring them the things their positions give them.

But these spoils are legitimate. They perhaps help to answer that frequent question: "If the Communists are limited to a maximum salary of \$112 a month, they can't be working for money; then what on earth can they be working for? What's the incentive?" The answer is: Position, Power, and—strange as it may seem—a disinterested love of their cause.

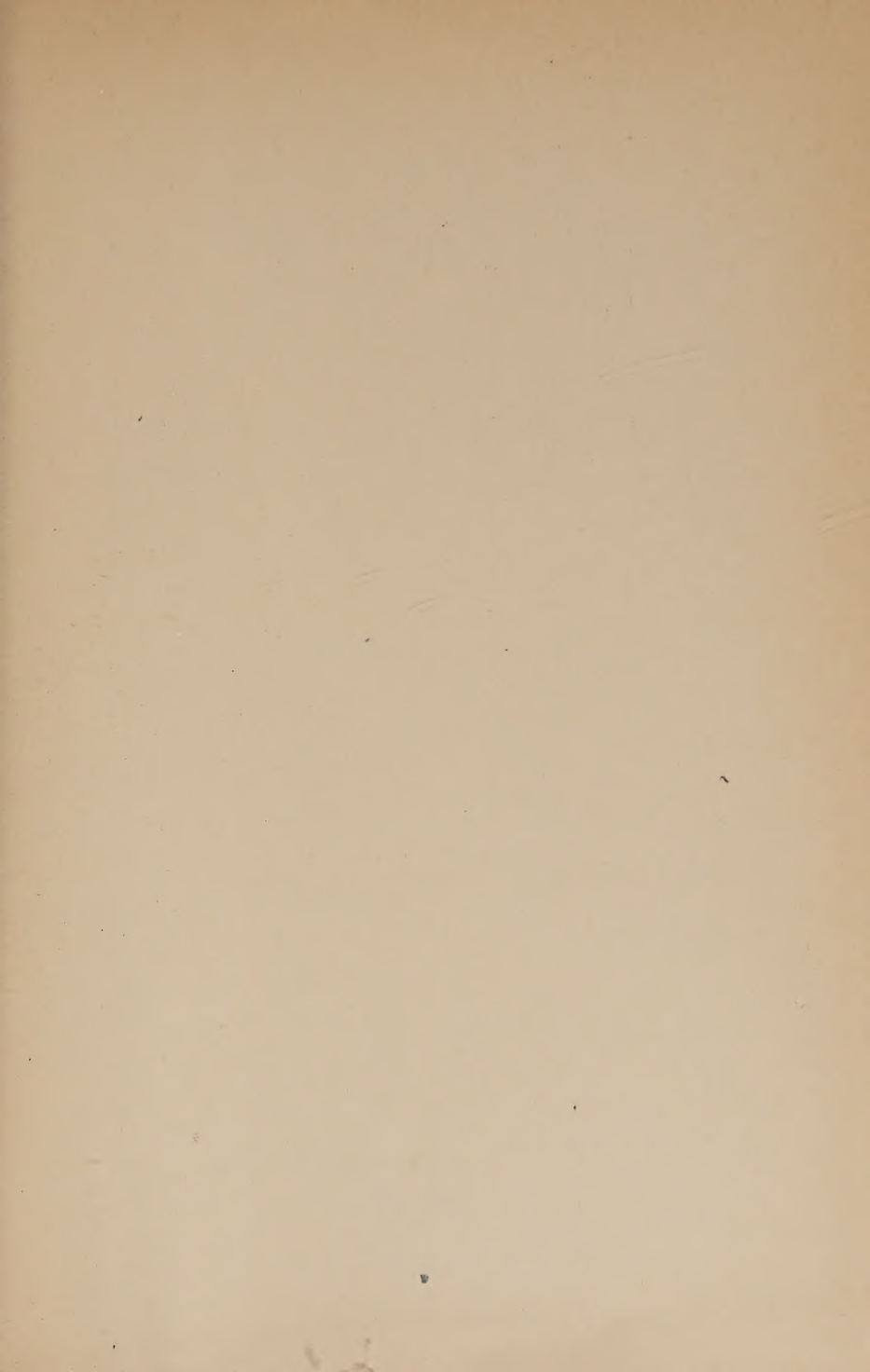
In the Russian villages to-day it is not always easy to be a Communist. The kulaks, rich peasants, killed quite a number last year. Some of these far-off Communists come pretty close to being heroes. In one village of 1,500 souls outside of Poltava, for instance, there were only four Communists and six candidates.

In another that we drove into under the shallow bars of sunset one night, a cluster of thatched roofs among the birch wood and pines, a desolate sight with the evening crows perched on another forest of rough wooden crosses on the rim of its black steppes, we found a young Communist, twenty-four years old, the President of the local Soviet.

He was a rough young peasant in sheepskin coat, fur hat, and heavy black boots. He slopped about with us in the mud. He showed us the school, the co-operative, and the church. It was then still "working," he pointed out, although only the old people went into it now. A mass of stupid peasants followed us about, forming a ring around us whenever we halted. They loomed up there bearded and sinister in the gathering gloom, expressive of all the dark peasant ignorance that makes them do such cruel and unreasonable things. The boy's face among theirs was pale and eager. He was trying to explain us to them and them to us. They growled like bears behind him, and one or two who were drunk tried to fling him aside.

"Please!" he begged, trying to bring order out of the dozens of questions they were hurling at us at the same time. They listened, then they shouted again. We shouldered our way out of the mob of them, drove off, left the thatched huts among the dark pines,

the crows flapping off the graveyard crosses to join that great nightly hegira that circled above us like a cloud in the red sky—left the young Communist still pleading with the people of his village.



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